Little Magazine C

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The Black Cat

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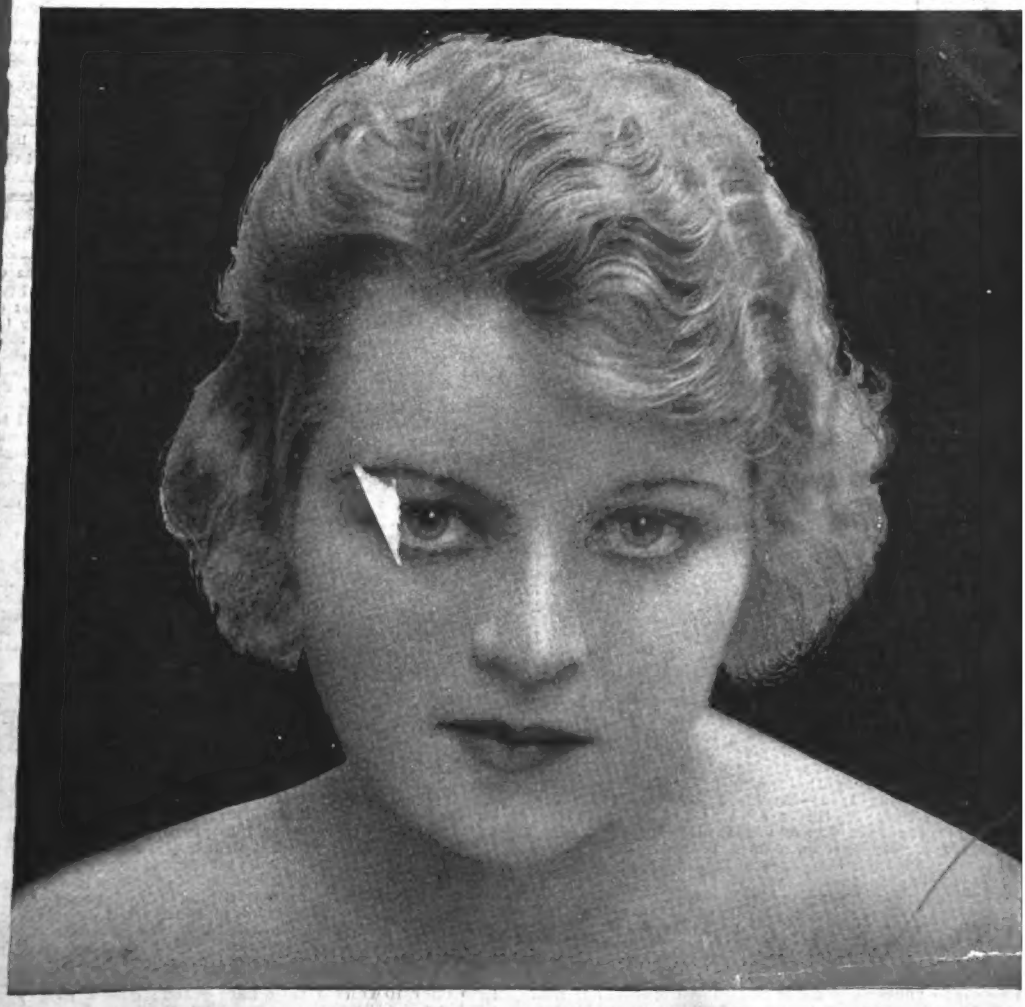
Clever Short Stories



WHY DON'T YOU TRY FOR A BLACK CAT CLUB PRIZE?

Former United States Senator Mason

Pioneer in Pure Food and Drug Legislation, Father of Rural Free Delivery System

Takes Nuxated Iron

to obtain renewed strength, power and endurance after the hardest fought political campaign of his life in which he was elected Congressman from the State of Illinois. The results he obtained from taking Nuxated Iron were so surprising that

SENATOR MASON NOW SAYS

Nuxated Iron should be made known to every nervous, run down, anaemic man, woman and child.

Opinion of Doctor N. H. Hornstine, for ten years in the Department of Public Health and Charities of Philadelphia, who has prescribed and thoroughly tested Nuxated Iron in his own private practice.

Former United States Senator Wm. E. Mason, recently elected Member to the U. S. Congress from Illinois.

WHAT SENATOR MASON SAYS:

"I have often said I would never recommend medicine of any kind. I believe that the doctor's place. However, after the hardest political campaign of my life, without a chance for a vacation, I had been starting to court every morning with that horrible tired feeling one cannot describe. I was advised to try Nuxated Iron, As a pioneer in the pure food and drug legislation, I was at first loath to try an advertised remedy, but after advising with one of my medical friends, I gave it a test. The results have been so beneficial in my own case I made up my mind to let my friends know about it, and you are at liberty to publish this statement if you so desire. **I am now sixty-five years of age, and I feel that a remedy which will build up the strength and increase the power of endurance of a man of my age should be known to every nervous, run-down anæmic man, woman and child.**"

Senator Mason's statement in regard to Nuxated Iron was shown to several physicians who were requested to give their opinions thereon.

Dr. N. H Hornstine, for ten years in the Department of Public Health and Charities of Philadelphia, said: "During my connection with the Department of Public Health and Charities as District Physician and with the Department of Public Safety and Police Surgeon, also as a member of important hospital staffs, I was often asked by both physicians and laymen: 'Doctor, what do you recommend to renew the supply of iron in the blood of people in a weak, nervous, run-down state? While knowing that iron deficiency was the cause of this debilitated condition, and that iron must be supplied before renewed strength could be obtained, I nevertheless always hesitated before giving an opinion. This was simply because of my lack of confidence in the ordinary forms of metallic iron salts with which there has been so much dissatisfaction. After carefully examining the formula of Nuxated Iron I realized that here at last was organic iron—the only kind I could conscientiously recommend, prepared in such a way with other ingredients as to be easily assimilated and calculated to act as a quick revitalizer of the blood and true strength builder. **Its administration in a number of stubborn cases where other tonics had utterly failed only served to convince me absolutely of the remarkable and unusual power of Nuxated Iron. When I personally took it I found the rapidity with which my energy and endurance increased most surprising.** In my opinion the widespread use of Nuxated Iron is bound to make a nation of stronger men, lovelier women and healthier children."

Dr. E. Sauer, a Boston physician who has studied abroad in great European medical institutions, said: "As I have said a hundred times over, organic iron is the greatest of all strength builders."

"Not long ago a man came to me who was nearly half a century old and asked me to give him a preliminary examination for life insurance. I was astonished to find him with a blood pressure of a boy of twenty and as full of vigor, vim and vitality as a young man; in fact, a young man he really was, notwithstanding his age. The secret, he said, was taking iron—Nuxated Iron had filled him with renewed life. At thirty he was in bad health; at forty-six he was care worn and nearly all in. Now, at fifty, after taking Nuxated Iron, a miracle of vitality and his face beaming with the buoyancy of youth."

"Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood to change food into living tissue. Without it, no matter how much or what you eat, your food merely passes through you without doing you any good. You don't get the strength out of it, and as a consequence you become weak, pale and sickly looking, just like a plant trying to grow in a soil deficient in iron. If you are not strong or well, you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see how much you have gained. I have seen dozens of nervous, run-down people who were ailing all the while double their strength and endurance and entirely rid themselves of all symptoms of dyspepsia, liver and other troubles in from ten to fourteen days' time simply by taking iron in the proper form. And this after they had in some cases been doctoring for months without obtaining any benefit. But don't take the old forms of reduced iron, iron acetate, or tincture of iron simply to save a few cents. The iron demanded by Mother Nature for the red coloring matter in the blood of her children is alas! not that kind of iron. You must take iron in a form that can be easily absorbed and assimilated to do you any good, otherwise it may prove worse than useless.

Many an athlete and prize-fighter has won the day simply because he knew the secret of great strength and endurance and filled his blood with iron before he went into the affray; while many another has gone down in inglorious defeat simply for the lack of iron."

Senator Mason's championship of Pure Food and Drugs legislation, his fight for the rural free delivery system, and his strong advocacy of all bills favoring labor and the rights of the masses, as against trusts and combines, made him a national figure at Washington and endeared him to the hearts of the working man and the great masses of people throughout the United States. Senator Mason has the distinction of being one of the really big men of the nation. His strong endorsement of Nuxated Iron must convince any intelligent thinking reader that it must be a preparation of very great merit and one which the Senator feels is bound to be of great value to the masses of people everywhere, otherwise he could not afford to lend his name to it, especially after his strong advocacy of pure food and drugs legislation.

Since Nuxated Iron has obtained such an enormous sale—over three million people using it annually—other iron preparations are often recommended as a substitute for it. The reader should remember that there is a vast difference between ordinary metallic iron and the organic iron contained in Nuxated Iron, therefore always insist on having Nuxated Iron as recommended by Dr. Howard James, and other physicians.

NOTE—Nuxated Iron, which is prescribed and recommended above by physicians in such a great variety of cases, is not a patent medicine nor secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists and whose iron constituents are widely prescribed by eminent physicians everywhere. Unlike the older inorganic iron products it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black nor upset the stomach; on the contrary, it is a most potent remedy in nearly all forms of indigestion, as well as for nervous, rundown conditions. The manufacturers have such great confidence in nuxated iron that they offer to forfeit $100.00 to any charitable institution if they cannot take any man or woman under 60 who lacks iron, and increase their strength 100 per cent or over in four weeks' time, provided they have no serious organic trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not at least double your strength and endurance in ten days' time. It is dispensed by all good druggists.

The Black Cat

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The Girl on the Cover

AMONG *our readers, doubtless there are many who have had the pleasure of seeing moving pictures that have been adapted from stories published in the BLACK CAT and will recognize in Marguerite Clayton one of the charming young screen stars who has made BLACK CAT pictures so successful. From time to time we plan to give our readers the pictures of other popular stars who have appeared in photo-dramatized versions of BLACK CAT stories.*

The screen career of Marguerite Clayton, the dainty little star featured in General Film Company's BLACK CAT Features, is of the stuff of which dreams are made. Miss Clayton was born in Salt Lake City in 1896. From the very day she joined the Essanay western studio, at the age of seventeen, she was certain of a place as a star in pictures, thereby establishing what is believed to be a record for versatility. For three years she was the envied heroine in the "Broncho Billy" pictures, the longest and most successful set of motion pictures featuring one character produced to date. After this long engagement Miss Clayton was transferred to the Chicago studio, where she has continued to star in important Essanay features, chief of which have been "A Daughter of the City," "Vultures of Society," "According to Code," "The Prince of Graustark," and "Is Marriage Sacred?"

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THE BLACK CAT CLUB

THE five dollar prize winners in the August contest were: Miss Harriette Wilbur, Duluth, Minn.; Mrs. M. F. Hall, Douglaston, N. Y.; Mrs. C. D. Craighead, New Orleans, La.; Miss Martha MacMaynes, Akron, Ohio; and Billy Dana, Los Angeles, Calif. John Berry, author of *The Gloved Revenge,* was the winner of the twenty-five dollar prize. Stories are criticised in the order of their standing in the contest.

In *The Gloved Revenge,* Mr. Berry has missed the subtle ideal—albeit an insane one—that he worked into his previous prize winning story, *The Clod.* The atmosphere of *The Gloved Revenge* is distinctly foreign. Without the third sentence in the first paragraph ("Rudik was from the Capital and was a member of the Assembly") the reader would certainly place the scene somewhere in Russia. The characters are continental in thought, word, ideal, deed and name. Indeed, the author must have discovered some spot in America where the melting process has not yet begun. Rudik is that type of man who makes an unwilling, but not altogether despicable villain, with some likable qualities to excuse the woman's infatuation for him and to make the reader condone his villainy. If at first Iglat appears as an ordinary, stolid rustic, his unique revenge shows him to be capable of action when aroused. He is a Slav in temperament; no Plymouth Rock American husband would take such a roundabout, artistic means of revenge, with the revolver or the divorce courts handy. Gersa is all woman in her ready response to wooing and luxury, in her confession of newly awakened ideals, in her love, in her despondency when abandoned by her lover, in her helplessness when once more in her husband's power; and finally she is quasi-oriental in her fatalistic ideals. This is a highly successful story of characterization.

When the Band Plays has creative atmosphere such as may be found in Kipling's heat pictures. Of course the idea of atmospheric influence is not new, but that it should predominate here to such a degree places the story in a class by itself. The construction of the story is exceptionally good. The converging lines of human destiny of trooper, school teacher and native are cleverly brought together by that natural agent, the demoralizing, maddening southeast wind. It is the compelling, fatalistic force back of Angus McGowan's revolt against discipline and also Lucy Granger's foolish adventure; likewise it is the insinuating, dominating influence that drives the little Panamanian insane. Its effect upon the latter is admirably used as the final loop to draw the other two characters into their composite destiny. Such a method of influencing the life-threads of the most important characters by the action of a third character, who is in turn swayed by the same dominating force in the action of the leading characters, is carried out with vigor and freshness that is to be highly commended. This story far excells most BLACK CAT love stories because of the individuality of the characters. They are real people with faults and virtues, and instead of being mated by an autocratic creator who must knock their wooden heads together to bring the match about, they are blown along the stream of life toward each other by the strong current of their own unacknowledged emotions, assisted by the matchmaking southeast wind. "When the Southeast Wind Blows" would have been more apropos as a title inasmuch as it is the wind, not the band, that causes all the trouble. A technical work of perfection is given the essential spark of life by a title that arouses interest and at the same time sums up the vital force of the story.

The quaint setting of New Orleans in high carnival is pictured in the story *Strictly Personal.* With this background the author exploits two types of French character—the sheltered aristocrat, proud to the point of cruelty, and the less fortunate, but more lovable type whose contact with humanity has made her generous, broad-minded and loyal. The charm of the story rests chiefly in the description of the carnival, for the story is not strong either in plot or emotional appeal.

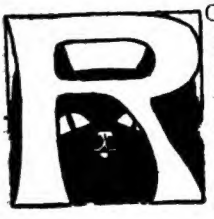
In the short story field, those who have heroism thrust upon them are quite as numerous as those who are born heroic or those who achieve heroism. Therefore there is nothing particularly unique in the underlying idea of the story *The Meanness of Pete Jerdo.* The story is saved from the commonplace by the author's clever study of Pete's wonderment as his better qualities develop almost without his volition. The metamorphosis of Pete's nature is not completed as the result of a single crisis. After each call to a better nature, he lapses back naturally to his mean, self-centered idea of getting even. It requires a series of jolts to his hidden heroism and manhood, topped by a unanimous vote of approval by the village-store jury to make him hear "the lilt of brass bands in a steady and enduring roll of music." Pete's realization that his forced reputation must be lived up to is a fitting climax. It is a story with a moral strong enough to appeal to the Christian Endeavor World, the Sunday School Times or the Weekly Witness.

(*Continued on page* 45)

THE ROSEMARY OF REMEMBRANCE

BY MARGARET DEAN STEVENS

When good fellows and a few sweet girl graduates get together, it's bound to be fair weather, even though the stein is holding itself aloof on the plate rail and the good song isn't ringing so clearly as in days of yore.



OBERT Dudley, broker, clean-cut, good-looking and forty, sat at his Circassian walnut desk in the best office suite in the new Metropolitan Building in the biggest city on the western coast.

He was looking over his personal afternoon mail, which had come later than usual, and frowning a little at the delay, for he had been ready to leave the office. As he cut open and read the last letter, the frown on his face relaxed its hold, lessened and disappeared. The letter was headed "Central University, Mathematics Department, Thomas J. McCullough, Professor." It said:

"Dear Old Bob:

Are you aware (of course you're not) that this is the year the old crowd promised to meet again at Commencement? As Flo and I are the only ones that married in our own crowd and also the only ones to live at the old stand, the reunion is to be at our home.

It's Flo's idea that just the crowd itself is to be present, so we are writing all the others to kindly leave superfluous husbands, wives and babies at home. Naturally, we are putting it more delicately than that, but as you have none of the above, I didn't mince matters.

Of course, you should have married long ago, you old sardine, but we'll forgive you. Come along, don't fail, under any consideration, to be with us June first,

For the sake of auld lang syne.

Tom McCullough."

There was no semblance of a frown now. Instead, a smile that suddenly broke out of its hiding place gave Bob Dudley's face a singularly boyish look.

There was another sheet of paper that had come out of the envelope,—a carbon copy. It was signed "Flo McCullough," and said:

"Dear Folks:

Tom is writing the letters to you about our reunion. I am adding a note to each. Forgive the carbon copy idea, but I'm the busiest woman in the U. S. A., and I wanted to tell you all the same thing anyway, excepting Bob and Nell.

You know Bob has never married! Nell has never married! Nuff said! Whatever happened, I don't know,—guess no one does,—but let's do our best to get them to fix it up at the reunion. Don't let them suspect, but leave them alone a good deal, etc.,— and if it accomplishes its mission, this reunion will be the best ever. All come."

The smile, which had spread, was the forerunner of a chuckle, then a burst that shook Bob Dudley in one of those 110-volt laughs which come occasionally from a quiet, unemotional man.

That Flo McCullough, in her great hurry, had enclosed one of the carbon copies in his own letter, seemed the season's best joke. He sat back in his big swivel chair and let his mind "turn the leaves of fancy" as it recalled to him the members of the old crowd. His mental vision brought them all before him one by one,—only half consciously did he reserve Nell Russell for the last. He found himself recalling her in various settings,—coming across the windswept, leafy campus, in a scarlet cape and tam cap,—breezing in to dinner at the old Gibson boarding house, late, out of breath, good-natured and sunny. He had cared,—Lord, yes, he had cared. That misunderstanding,—how trivial and foolish it had been—something to do with a red-haired fellow in the old Philomathian Literary Society.

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Into his reminiscent dreams came the office boy. "Mr. Dudley, Mrs. Dudley said to tell you that her and the little boys was waitin' for you."

Ay,—there's the joke! Flo McCullough had evidently never heard that Bob Dudley had been married three years and was the proud father of as obstreperous a pair of twins as ever poked pencils and button hooks down the registers.

Robert Dudley stuck the letter in his pocket, locked his desk and took the elevator down. A big car waited his coming. In the tonneau sat a sweet-faced, daintily gowned lady, who clutched two little duplicates to keep them from throwing themselves out bodily at their daddy.

"Hello, there, Goose Grease and Lightning," he greeted them, and to his wife, "Could you stand a good joke?"

"I might risk it," she admitted.

But it was not until they were on the porch of the big brick and stucco house that he produced the letter. He handed her Tom McCullough's with no comment. She read it through until she came to the statement that Bob had no wife nor children. "Well,—I must say—I like *that!*" she announced.

And then—yes, it does seem incredible, —he handed her the carbon copy. At the same time he shook again with his 110-laugh. When she had read it through, because she was merry-hearted and liked a good story, she laughed too; but it wasn't 110, more like 40.

"Now," he said decisively, "I'm *going* and I intend to be just what they expect me to be,—a single man."

When she gasped at the audacity of it, he went into the details of his plans. He was going to turn the tables on the old crowd and pose as unmarried until the last evening, when he would tell them the joke. If she thought the journey and the plan unwise she gave no utterance to it, merely pulled the handiest twin to her and hid her face in his fat, warm neck.

So, it came about, that on the morning of June first, Bob Dudley, very well groomed and prosperous looking, with something that resembled laughter in his eyes, sat in the smoker of an east bound train as it pulled out of Omaha. An hour out, at a little country station, a fat, shabby man with an old-fashioned telescope valise climbed onto the train.

"Fat Matt, as I live," said Bob Dudley to the huge fellow who came lumbering down the aisle. They wrung each other's hands long and vigorously.

Matt Jones in the old days had been proportioned between fat and bones as the ratio of four to one. Now it was sixteen to one in favor of the fat. He edited a country newspaper and still paid rent, but was the most contented man in the county.

When they had visited for awhile, Bob suggested their going back through the coaches. There was a possibility that they might run across someone else. Through two coaches they passed, recognized by no one nor seeing anyone they knew. In the third, half-way down, sat a lady, chin in hand, looking intently out of the window. She wore a smart tailored suit and from her small hat rose a pair of jaunty wings. Something in the tilt of her head and the gold-brown of her hair caught the attention of the two men.

"Matt," Bob half turned to him, "who's that girl?"

"Nell Russell," he whispered back and got so red in the face that Bob would have laughed aloud if his own heart had not been pounding strangely.

"How do you do, Nell?" He spoke in as matter-of-fact a tone as though he had been seeing her all these years.

She glanced up, a faint pink travelling over her face, but kept her poise perfectly as she put out her hand. Seats were quickly arranged so that they might all talk together. It was noticeable that most of Nell Russell's remarks were addressed to Fat Matt and it was toward him that she usually looked.

They lunched together in the diner and when the girl inadvertently said, "Bob, here's your favorite cantaloupe," she looked genuinely distressed at the slip.

It was late afternoon when the train pulled into Watertown. The station was a mass of moving students, class colors, arriving parents and old grads.

"Brings it all back, doesn't it, Nell?" Bob asked as he took her grips.

Flo and Tom were watching for them — Flo, plump and matronly, Tom as tall and cadaverous looking as though he ate his mathematics.

"How am I ever going to get you all into my car?" he asked as he led the way to where a little car of very modest price and very immodest notoriety waited. "If any of you crack a joke about it, I'll tip you all out when I turn the corner at Dry Run."

"It's an elegant little car, Tom," said Bob, at which they all laughed immoderately.

Matt and Tom sat in the front seat where Matt oozed over the sides. The others filled the back seat.

"Anybody else here?" they asked.

"Everybody that can come," Flo informed them. "There are nine of us now. Molly Fletcher is here and Jim Caldwell and Ethel Dotson and Jen Grier."

The little car bounced merrily over familiar roads lined with unfamiliar residences. past new dormitories and boarding houses, and slackened in front of the campus that smiled gently at them like a kind old mother whose sweet face welcomed them home.

There were artistic new entrances to the driveways, a half dozen new buildings, and a strange campanile pointed its finger obelisk-like to the blue sky; but the older buildings, the trees, the paths under them, the very grass, seemed waiting to bestow upon the wanderers the rosemary of remembrance.

Bob Dudley involuntarily looked across Flo to Nell Russell. She turned big blue eyes to him that were moist with memory. "Oh," she breathed, "it's rather like a grave yard, after all, where our youth lies dead." Of which statement Flo made a mental note to tell Tom the minute she had him alone.

They stopped in front of a low, roomy bungalow whose long porch held two hammocks and numberless rockers. Three people were sitting there, but all rose and came down the steps. Little Jen Grier came first, tinier than ever, with the same quick-motioned ways that had won for her the name of Jenny Wren. She had been saucy, too, like her namesake, quick-witted and sharp-tongued, and in the joking way with which Fate handles us, she had married a minister.

Ethel Dotson, heavy and slow-moving, came forward a little shyly. She was the wife of the governor of a southern state, but in her heart she despised the life and the executive mansion and longed to be back in her own home.

Jim Caldwell had broadened, too, from the slim college boy to a plump, well-fed dentist. As Bob Dudley shook Jim Caldwell's hand he said, "Good Heavings! Is *everybody* fat?"

"All except me," said a voice above them; and Molly Fletcher stood in the doorway, literally filling it from side to side. She was a sight, but her goodnatured face beamed happiness behind her big spectacles. The years of hard work on a Kansas farm had left her with the philosophy that "Although for a dozen years it was just nothing but windstorms and new babies and grasshoppers and whooping-cough and crops drying up and measles and seventeen-year locusts and pink-eye, it was all for our good, I guess."

The hour that followed was not an unqualified success. After the travellers had dressed and returned to the porch, things seemed to lag. The reunion seemed not to have lived quite up to its expectations. The old crowd was nothing but a group of nearly-to-middle-age people who politely and with forced jocularity recalled anecdotes of some especially jolly young folks they had once known. After all, you can't entice Youth from her hiding place when your mind is on a growing boy's examinations or an unfinished job of printing or the setting hens that were to come off to-day.

At ten minutes of six Flo announced that they had better start as they were to go several blocks to their dinner. It was an odd looking little procession that they made. Flo led the way with plump, dapper Jim Caldwell and quiet, tranquil Ethel Dotson. Fat Matt and little Jen Grier were behind them, looking like De

Wolf Hopper and his tiniest ballet dancer. Tom McCullough, gaunt, and as long as a geometrical equation, was painfully trying to suit his step to huge Molly Fletcher's waddling gait.

Bob Dudley and Nell Russell, slightly conscious that the others had purposely left them behind, were bringing up in the rear. Although their conversation consisted largely in generalizations on the improved condition of College Hill, although he was apparently saying, "They have converted Prexie's old house into an isolation hospital," and she was answering, "What a good idea,"—what mentally passed between them was, "Do you remember that seat under the oak, Nell?" and, "Oh, *do* I, Bob?"

As the little procession followed Flo's lead, crossing one corner of the campus to a row of old houses that stood modestly facing short side street, it gradually percolated through someone's head that she was taking them to Gibson's. Immediately they were all exclaiming the same thing: "Surely, Ma Gibson doesn't keep boarders yet!"

"Goodness sakes, no!" Flo informed them. "She is over eighty and lives out in the country with her son. A young couple lives here. They use the old dining room for a laundry, but when I told them about the reunion and how we'd like to eat here for old times' sake they took out the tubs and boiler and we fitted it up as nearly like it used to be as we could."

They turned into the familiar old basement dining room.

"Same old ivy. Same old screen door. Same old bumble-bee hanging around," Jim Caldwell said as he went in.

The kitchen door swung open and Flo's biggest surprise stood before them. Lizzie! Tall, angular Lizzie,—her pale hair drawn as tightly back and pinned with as countless a number of wire hairpins, her apron as big and stiffly starched, her eyes shining as kindly over huge cheek bones, as ever. They were all shaking hands with her and listening to her explanation: "Yes, I been married fourteen year come Christmas—livin' up to Hanley—'j'ever see such foolishness—me leavin' my old man and chickens to come down and cook for you—but Mis' McCullough she would have it—"

Youth, who had eluded them up to this moment, seemed to slip in shyly from the kitchen with Lizzie. For the first time they began to feel young. In hilarity that was no longer forced they sat down in their own old places. Only for a moment were they sobered by the thought of the two who were absent. Lou Reeves was not there, for she was teaching in the Philippines. Bert Morrison was not there, for he was dead.

As the meal progressed, all restraint vanished. Gone were the years and the newly formed ties,—forgotten were the hardships and joys, the hours of failure and the hours of triumph. They were the old crowd. The band was playing La Paloma on the campus. Lizzie was in the kitchen. Youth was in their midst.

And Youth abided. So much in the spirit of the occasion were they that by unanimous vote they decided to cut the class play and continue their old time visit on the McCullough's ample porch.

The laughter that rang out from that porch was so infectious that more than one passing student grinned in sympathy. Long-neglected episodes were brought to light,—the evening was replete with "Do you remember?"

"Remember, Tom, in Latin class, reading *'Hic, hic, sunt senatu,'* and Bob whispering, 'Sit down, old man, you're drunk?' "

"Remember your note, Matt, that you pinned on the laundry you sent to the washerwoman:

'If all the shirts I've sent to thee
Should be delivered home to me,—
Ah, well! The dresser would not hold
So many shirts as there would be
If all my shirts came home to me'?"

"That reminds me of Molly's touching ode to our china-painting teacher when that craze first struck:

'The hours I've spent with thee, dear heart,
Are as a string of daubs to me,
I count them over, every one apart,
My Crockery,—my Crockery.'"

Far into the evening they sat in reminiscent mood. No one enjoyed it more keenly than Nell Russell. Temperamental, emotional, she seemed to throw her whole soul into living over her youth. Gay and sparkling, she was vaguely conscious that Bob Dudley's eyes were upon her with something of the same expression in them that had been there for her in the old days.

So apparent was this to the others, also, that no one was surprised when the two lingered after the crowd had dispersed. Romance-loving Flo, in her own room, whispered rapturously to her practical husband, "It's working, Tom,—oh, *joy!*"

That "it" was "working" became more evident as snatches of low-toned conversation from the porch were wafted to her.

"I *did* care—with every fibre of feeling—" came from Bob, and Nell's softer tones, "But how was *I* to know?" And a little later:

"Good-night, Bob."

"Good-night, dear."

"Tom," Flo whispered, *"he kissed her!"*

"Hear it?" he growled, sleepily.

"No,— but I *felt* it," she retorted.

When Bob Dudley went to the room which he was to share with Jim Caldwell in the house next door, he realized that Nell Russell seemed as much a part of his life as she had been in the days long gone by. *Had she really ever been out of it?* At any rate, the college setting, the old crowd, the moonlight night, all had woven a magic spell, the charm of which he was enjoying more than his fancy had dreamed.

"Jim, a fellow can make an awful ass of himself," he said enigmatically to his yawning bedfellow.

As the second day wore on with its alumni reunion, parade, ball game and picnic supper on the river bluff, Bob Dudley found himself dreading more and more to break the news of his marriage to the crowd. The joke that had appeared so hilariously funny in California, now seemed harder to carry through than he had anticipated. Instinctively he knew that, for the rest of his stay, his status would be lowered in the eyes of the people whose faith he wished to keep.

And Nell?

He chose the evening of that second day to enlighten them.

With apparently an unintentional slip of the tongue, he said, "Just before I left home I was arguing that same thing with my wife —"

It was like a hand grenade in their midst.

"Your *what?*" "What's that?" "What are you saying?" came the shrapnel return.

Everyone looked involuntarily at Nell Russell and as quickly looked away. She had glanced up at Bob, startled,—then a flush, painful in its intensity, slipped over her face as she dropped her eyes away from them all.

Bob Dudley explained with more elaborate finish than quite necessary, how it had seemed a joke when reading Tom's letter to let them think him still single,—that he had been married three years before in California,—he hoped they would all visit him sometime—

But no joke ever lay in such a flat, punctured condition as that one. Disappointment showed plainly in more than one face, but above all, sympathy,—sympathy for poor, proud Nell who wanted none.

"The whole thing's spoiled," wailed Flo McCullough to her liege lord. "And that poor Nell—she has cared for him *so*—how *could* he—"

"Well, cheer up,—it's love's labour lost," advised Tom, who was secretly as disappointed as she.

Another day of Commencement activities came, in which everyone in the crowd took a feverish interest as though to keep from thinking of the romance that was no longer romantic. And when in the evening Bob and Nell deliberately broke away for a long stroll out toward the country, something akin to disgust swept through the mind of the most loyal friend.

There was a noticeable frigidity in the air when the two came back to the porch, although Molly Fletcher, with characteristic good spirits was as talkative as ever.

Nell looked very sweet and thoughtful as she sat down in the shadow of the vines. Bob perched on the rail near by. Suddenly, with an impulsive movement, he

reached down and took her hand. Everyone felt uncomfortable and embarrassed. Fat Matt wheezed to Tom McCullough, "The mutts!"

"People," said Bob Dudley, and his voice had a queer foreign note in it, "I have something to say—and I want to say it to all of you here first. It's going to be hard—you're going to censure me—I take all the blame—you are in no way to think hard of Nell." He raised his head suddenly with almost an arrogant gesture. "Sometimes," he went on in a moment, "a man makes a mistake and the only thing for him to do is to acknowledge that mistake and—rectify it if he can."

Everyone was staring at him as though hypnotized, all but Nell. She had her head in the hand that Bob was not holding. "Long ago—I made a mistake—" His voice was tense. "Nell and I were engaged—I—something came up—an unbelievably small thing it seems now in the light of the years that are ours. Three years ago I married—" He began picking nervously at the Crimson Ramblers. "When Tom's letter came and I realized that none of you had heard of my marriage, the temptation came to me to keep up the pretense for awhile—to see Nell as I used to—here—at the old school—with all of you. I let my wife read Tom's letter—she even knows what I planned to do." He paused. Everyone felt the import of the moment. All eyes were fixed upon him. There was no sound but Fat Matt's asthmatic breathing.

"Well,—" he went on, "I found Nell unchanged—and caring for me—just as I know I have cared for her all these years. Nothing else matters now." He suddenly stood up, big and dark against the rose vines. "Again I beg of you not to be harsh in your judgement when I tell you that Nell and I are leaving in the morning and we go—together."

It was like the third big act in a drama. They sat there stunned,—these kind, simple, common folk, to whom sex problems and the divorce court had come no closer than newspaper reading. The tragedy of it, the overwhelming bigness of the step Bob and Nell were taking, left them in a half-anaesthetized condition.

Just as little Jen Grier, who had been working her hands together, was moistening her dry lips to speak, Bob turned to Nell and touched his hand gently to her bowed head.

"Don't you think we had better go in the morning, mamma?"

"Yes, I think so, father," came in muffled tones.

"Mamma! Father! What do you mean?" They were shrill, nerve-tense questions, like the staccato bark of dogs.

"I mean," Bob said deliberately, "that just because you didn't know that Nell and I were married three years ago is no reason—"

They were no longer a *stunned* audience. They were a *stung* audience,—and between the two lies many a ripe egg and tomato can. None of these commodities being commonly kept on a university professor's front porch, the audience substituted numerous hammock and porch pillows and a choice collection of epithets.

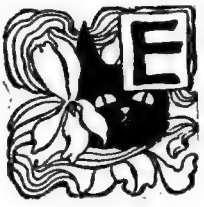
"You see," Bob Dudley was defending Mrs. Dudley with one arm, "first I got Tom's letter; then Nell's, addressed to Miss Nell Russell, at Seattle where she last taught, was forwarded to her. Then we knew for sure that none of you had heard we were married. Speaks well for our correspondence, doesn't it? And when Flo generously put one of her carbon copies in my letter so that we knew you were all expecting a regular Mary Pickford reel from us,—we decided to put on a good performance so not to disappoint you. I had hard work persuading Nell to leave the twins——"

"Twins?" It was Fat Matt, the machinery of whose mind had suddenly begun to work. "You mean you two folks are married and own a pair of twins? Well, you old *double-barrelled* mutts!"

AN OUTRAGE OR SO

BY WILLIAM HAMILTON OSBORNE

D. Dacres and Gertie Gilfoil do not belong to the camouflage school of art; still, they succeed fairly well in painting the object (A) so that it fades into the background (B) and has every appearance of being a case for the National Purity League.



EVEN if Dorothy and me hasn't got swell clients—we're Legal Aid mostly—you can stake your bottom dollar that we've got swell friends.

Dorothy is D. Dacres, counselor at law, and I'm Gertie Gilfoil, her lady law clerk. It ain't always that she's been D. Dacres, grubbing along in the law business with her heels run down. Her old man was the leader of the bar until Debevoise got his clutches on his pile. In them days D. Dacres wore silk stockings and went to Miss Alderdice's where the regular charge for learning how to enter a drawin' room is five hundred per.

So in our suite of offices we often has a menagerie in the mornin' and five o'clock tea in the afternoon. I ain't sayin' who D. Dacres's best pals is—maybe most of them belongs to the menagerie, but there's a bunch of the old Alderdice crowd still sticks. Them that tried to patronize D. Dacres just because she'd seen better days —they've slid off into the innocuous.

Well, one day in comes Claire Lispenard, and sails right into D. Dacres's private office without as much as sayin' by your leave. I could see D. Dacres wasn't overjoyed,— Claire was one of the patronizin' kind anyhow,—but they kisses and makes the fine fuss that they all does, and then Claire Lispenard slumps down into a chair. The door stays open and I hears her talk.

"Dorothy," she says, "I come to you as a *dernier resort.*" Which is as much as as to say,— for you can stake your bottom dollar that I looked it up,—that she tried every other place before comin' to us.

"Thank you," said D. Dacres grimly. "Why didn't you try a clairvoyant first?"

"I—I did," says Claire Lispenard. Her lips was tremblin' and I could see that somethin' was the matter. Finally she stands up and leans over the desk and looks D. Dacres in the eye.

"Dorothy," she says, "I'm engaged to Bob Pell. It's announced to-day."

I could see from where I sat that it hit D. Dacres right between the eyes. She got up and held her hand across the table.

"Put it there, Claire," she says, "you're true blue."

My, but there was a difference in the atmosphere after them words. D. Dacres is a person you can *feel* a mile off. When she's cold you freeze and when she's warm it's like sittin' by a radiator with four pounds of steam full head on.

"You're a brick, Claire," she says.

And I knowed why she said it. Bob Pell was goin' to state's prison for five years and he was goin' right away unless somethin' happened quick. Let me tell you about him.

Bob Pell was State Senator Pell. He was one of our risin' young statesmen. He was clean as a whistle. Bennington Swords sent him to the State Senate. Maybe you've never heard of Bob Pell, but you've sure heard of Swords. Swords is known from Maine to Mexico; but he lives right in our midst here in this burg as you might say. Swords has got a mortgage on everything and everybody in the town and state, exceptin' maybe me and Dacres. He's boss. But I want you to see him right. He ain't no ham handed proposition with a stummick stickin' out in front. Them kind is human,—Swords is the devil. He's thin from his hair down to his toes; his lips is the thinnest part of him. He don't know what blood means,

or he didn't until he got a certain jolt I'll tell you about.

Well, anyway, that's Swords. He sends Bob Pell to the Senate and because of that he thinks he owns Bob Pell. Then he starts to sell the old Tri-State Canal, a proposition that's worth twenty-five million if it's worth a cent, to his own railroad for a million dollars, and he orders the state legislature to put it through.

Well, the House puts it through, but the Senate balks. Bob Pell's the chief balker. The old Tri-State Canal franchise belongs to the state and Bob can't see givin' twenty-four million dollars worth of state canal to Swords's railroad. Bob holds the controllin' vote and he turns down the bill.

Meantime Swords has slapped him in the face; but Bob never flinches. Then Swords offers him Congress, the United States Senate, the Governorship,—anything, to pass that bill. Bob Pell stands pat.

"All right," says Swords, "no use talkin' to a dead man."

Swords don't say things that he don't mean. When he says a dead man, he means it. It's a prophecy all right. He starts out to kill Bob Pell. He impeaches him for corruptin' voters and for givin' bribes to get hisself elected to the Senate.

Proof? Evidence? Nothing to it. Swords can prove anythin' he wants to prove; and Bob Pell is snaked so quick out of his seat in the Senate that he don't know where he stands. But Swords ain't through. He gets Bob indicted on the same charges that impeaches him and he gets him convicted and gets him sent up for five years.

Bob knowed what it meant and so did DeForest, his lawyer. It meant that Bob would serve his term. Of course they appealed and they got all sorts of stays; but Bob was branded and he was doomed, and everybody knowed it. Everybody called him a poor fool,—they all knowed he wasn't no knave. They just took him for a plain idiot for standin' up against Swords.

And with Bob goin' to wear stripes inside of three months, here was his girl announcin' their engagement.

"Dorothy," says Claire Lispenard, "I'm desperate. I'm part of Bob Pell now and if he goes to prison he'll take part of me with him. We'll suffer together," she says, "and I'm desperate. I've got to fight. Bob has got to stay out, he has got to be cleared. You understand me,—cleared."

"What can be done?" says Dacres. "DeForest, his lawyer, is the best man in the state. He's done his damndest," says Dacres,—or words to that effect. "I'm only a woman lawyer, Claire. How can I do anything?"

Claire shakes her head. Her face twitches like she's got to the breakin' point.

"It's got past the lawyers, Dorothy," she says. "This ain't for men lawyers nor woman lawyers neither. It's just for women, and I come to you," she says, "because you got the bean," she says. "There's one thing," she goes on, "that I've thought about. You know Tony Swords, Swords's daughter—"

"Antoinette Swords," says D. Dacres, "used to be a friend of mine. I know her well. But what of that?"

"We've got to go to Tony Swords," says Claire. "Maybe Tony could handle the old man."

Dacres shakes her head. "Believe me, no," she says.

Claire gets her by the arm. "Believe me, yes," she answers. "It's our last chance, and I want you to work it out for me, Dorothy," she says. "You got the bean. You try it on Antoinette Swords. See what you can do. We need help, Bob and me,— God knows we need help."

D. Dacres thinks a minute.

"My view is," she says finally, "that it's useless. Tony Swords has got no influence over Bennington, and besides Tony's as cool as a cucumber herself. Why don't you go to her?" she says.

Well, of course the answer to that is that Claire Lispenard *has* been to her and so has other people, but it's no use.

"I'll tell you what," says D. Dacres finally, "I think it's best to set the stage. Could you sit down sometime, in the presence of some other people, Claire, and tell the whole story just as you've been tellin' me? Could you put your soul into it?"

"Could I," says Claire, "I tell you

I am desperate enough for anything."

"I'll make a date," says Dorothy, "I'll make a date here for you and Tony."

Antoinette Swords was one of Alderdice's, and you can believe me that she knowed how to enter anything from a drawing room to the arena of events. She was a spicy, perky, little proposition, pretty as a picture and somethin' about her that made you like her, even though you knowed you couldn't trust her around the corner. She was one of the offish ones that hadn't never been to see us neither. She comes sailin' into my outside suite, consisting of two rooms separated by a low railin' and a gate, and jerks her head towards the private office, and whispers:

"Who's inside?"

I see right away that she was a snooper. She got all that from the old man but she's different from the old man in one respect,—she's got red blood and lots of it.

"Can I peek in?" she whispers.

Now this gives me an idea. It just comes to me an account of Tony's snoopin' traits.

"Not through the door," I says. I goes through the gate and takes my turn to do some whisperin'. "It's part of my system in this here office," I says, "not to let nothin' go on exceptin' what I knows about. I repose confidence in you," I says, "not to give me away to my boss."

So I goes over to the wall and lifts off the calendar. The part of the system I was tellin' her about is a hole through the wall. It comes out in the back shelves in D. Dacres's room where nobody can notice it, and it comes out in a clear space between two books. By applyin' the eye or the ear the results is at once apparent.

"If you don't say nothin'," I says to Tony Swords, "you can see fine through that hole and hear fine too."

Well, I knowed what was goin' on inside. Claire Lispenard was there breakin' her heart over Bob Pell's trouble, and I knowed it would be good listenin'.

Tony Swords claps her hand over the hole and looks at me. "They're talkin' about my father somethin' scandalous," she says.

"Who is," I says, calm enough, "everybody?"

"But," she goes on, "he can't be as bad as that,—as what they're sayin'."

Well, she listens some more. Finally she can't stand it. "I'm goin' in," she says, "I got to hear this whole thing out."

"Don't say nothin' to nobody about the system in the wall," I says.

She tips me a wink as much as to say, "We're two of a kind, bo." And then I announces her and in she goes.

Well, it seems she never reads nothin' about her father, Bennington Swords, in the papers,—she's sick and tired of all that long ago,—and she really believed all along that Bob Pell was the blackest kind of a blackguard. For the first time she talked about it with somebody who had a bean. Dacres knowed a trick or two, so she aimed at Tony Swords's head. She was talkin' to the daughter of Bennington Swords, and to nobody else. She showed her clean through from start to finish, step by step, what the old man had done to Bob Pell.

"Tony," she says finally, "if you got any manhood about you, you got to clean this thing up."

Tony's worried,—I can see that,—but she only shrugs her shoulders.

"The woman ain't livin'," she says, "that can move Bennington Swords. He don't think nothin' of women and he wouldn't move an inch for me."

"He's fond of you, ain't he?" asked Dacres.

"You bet your life he is," says Tony. "I'm all he's got and just as like as not everything he does he's workin' out for me. But it's him that does the workin' out,—I can't do any of it."

"You can appeal to him," says Dacres, "you can tell him that this here thing is the only thing you want—"

"Good Lord," says Tony Swords. "The only thing that I want,—why, there's one thing that I want more than anything else in the world and he won't give it to me."

I saw Dacres stiffen,—just like that. I see that she's got the germ of an idea in her bean.

"Do you mind tellin' us," she says, "what

it is you want more than anything else?"

Tony laughs like she was kind of desperate too. "I thought everybody knew what I wanted," she says. "I want to marry Billy Pomeroy,—that's what I want; and Billy Pomeroy wants to marry me; and Bennington Swords won't have it, and what Bennington Swords won't have,—he won't have, that's all. He'll do anything for me except the thing I want. Maybe you got troubles of your own, Claire Lispenard," she says, "but you're engaged to the man you want, convict or otherwise," she says. "But look at me. I want Billy Pomeroy and I want him right away," she says. "He's the only man that can ever make me happy. It's the one thing in the whole world;—and Bennington Swords says no. Now how much influence do you think I got with Bennington Swords?"

There was silence for awhile and I knowed Dacres's bean was workin'.

"H'm," she says finally. "So you'd like to marry Billy Pomeroy."

"You bet I would," says Tony. "But at that," she says, "it's got to be did right. I ain't goin' to take no chances of bein' cut off with a shillin'!"

"H'm," says Dacres, "excuse me for a minute," and she comes out into my suite of offices and shuts the private door.

"Gilfoil," says she, "sit down and let us reason together, you and me."

I ain't goin' to tell you here and now what all she said nor what all I said. But finally she looks me in the eye and says:

"Do you think it can be did, Gilfoil?"

"Leave it to me," I says.

You see, that's the way we works. D. Dacres with her bean figures somethin' out, and I go and do it.

D. Dacres goes back into the private room and I goes with her.

"Now," she says to Claire Lispenard, "does anybody know that you was comin' here to see me?"

Claire thinks and shakes her head. "Not even Bob Pell," she answers.

"What about you, Tony?" says Dacres.

"Good Lord," says Tony, "I go everywhere, and I ain't never been here before."

"Does Billy Pomeroy know you are here or that you was comin' here?" says Dacres.

"No," says Tony. "There's mighty few things that I tell Billy Pomeroy. There's just so much a man ought to know and no more, believe me that," she says.

"Now," says Dacres, "we're goin' to make a trade,—we're goin' to close a deal. You listen, both of you, and let me talk."

Well, believe me, a few things happened that day, and they happened quick. Maybe I told you that me and Joe Gish is friends. Joe Gish is the manager of Black and Greenstein's office just across the hall. He's a mighty nice chap, but he's got one fault, —he sticks closer than a brother. It ain't a bad fault for a feller that you like, at that, but sometimes it gets embarassin'. Just now it interfered with the practice of the profession of law. I had to pick a quarrel with Joe and I had to do it for just one reason—and I had to do it quick. I didn't want Joe to come out to our flat, not for two weeks, maybe three. So at four o'clock that afternoon, believe me, Joe Gish and me was mortal enemies for the time bein'. Of course I knowed that I could patch it up, because I had put him in wrong. He hadn't done a thing, but he was ready to get down on his knees and apologize for it any time.

That was one thing that happened. By six o'clock I got home and my sister Nora was wheelin' around in her chair tryin' to get supper like she always does.

"Now say, Nora," I says, "none of that, and it's to keep you from doin' that, that I've scoured this whole burg this blessed afternoon."

"What for?" says Nora.

"For a servant girl," I says, "and by the way," I says, "here she is," for I hears a step comin' up the stairs. There's a tap on the door, and a woman with a shawl on comes in.

She looks around kind of scared at first, and then she sees me. Then she sinks down in a chair.

"It's the right place, all right," she says, her breath comin' fast, "but you could bowl me over with a feather."

Nora looks at me from her wheel chair.

"This is the new servant girl, Nora," I

says. "Shake hands with Miss Tony Swords," I says. "Miss Swords," I says, "this is my little sister Nora."

I see by the way Tony looks at Nora that she is somethin' else besides Bennington Swords's daughter. She sure has got some kind of a heart beatin' with sympathy in her inside. She holds on to Nora's hand hard and fast.

"We'll have bully times together, Nora, while this duck, Gertie Gilfoil, is down town. Only," she says, with her finger on her lips, "you mustn't ever tell."

Well, Nora didn't ever tell; and the next day the papers had the story, a beautiful, yellow, soul stirring narrative.

Antoinette Swords had disappeared. You know the kind of stuff they put up in the papers nowadays. Ten years ago maybe the thing wouldn't have hit so hard, but there's a ghost stalking back of every tale like this,—white slavery. It was nuts for the newspapers. They simply raked up everything from Charlie Ross down to date, took a composite photograph of it and slung it into type.

Of course Bennington Swords got busy right away. He made tracks for Billy Pomeroy and found Billy in a sweat of horror. Billy didn't know no more about it than Swords did,—Swords became convinced of that; but he had Billy Pomeroy shadowed nevertheless. Singular as it may seem, he found out a whole lot of good about Billy and nothing that was bad. Swords set every detective in the city on the case and got the best specialists in the world to work on it. They followed all the clues, but there are a few clues that can't be followed. Nobody had seen Tony Swords come into our office that day and nobody had seen her leave it. The hotels and hospitals couldn't cough up nothing, and if Nora Gilfoil and me wanted a cousin in to visit us for a week or so, what difference did it make to the gang upstairs or the bunch below? And with Tony's hair braided tight down on her head and with a shawl most of the time hangin' on her shoulders, you wouldn't have known her in a thousand years.

D. Dacres and me goes on practicin' law; Joe Gish goes on keepin' away until I says the word; and DeForest keeps on appealin' Bob Pell's case,—tryin' to spell hope somehow out of black despair.

Then Bennington Swords gets a letter. It ain't signed or nothin'. This is what it says:

"You let up on Bob Pell, and we'll let up on your daughter; but you got to be mighty quick about it or it will be the worse for her."

That was what the letter said, but it was not the only thing that gave him a jolt. Inside the letter was a nice long bit of curly hair,—Tony's hair. She cut it off her switch the night before and put it in the envelope. Nora had wrote the letter and mailed it with her own hands.

Well, that gave Swords his cue, and he started out for Bob Pell. Of course the papers got the letter and of course Bob Pell denied any knowledge of it.

"Probably a fake letter," says Bob Pell, "got up by some of my enemies just to paint me blacker still. I don't know nothing about Bennington Swords's daughter and he knows I don't. I've been under the surveillance of his men for the past twelve months. He knows every move I've made. This is simply another millstone hung about my neck."

Bennington Swords knowed that Pell spoke the truth. He couldn't get no more on Pell than he could on Billy Pomeroy.

Next day he got another letter and another lock of hair; the day after that another letter and another lock of hair.

"I don't know," says Tony Swords, "how long this switch is goin' to hang out, and it won't do to buy another, we'll get caught. I wish I had a false ear," she says, "or somethin' I could send him."

I goes to a vase up on the chimney piece and I finds just what I wants.

"Here," I says, "suppose you send him this; and if that don't do the trick I've got a loose one,—we can send him somethin' fresh."

The next day Bennington Swords got still another letter. It said:

"This is number one. Every day we'll pull another tooth until you let up on Bob Pell."

The next day my wobbly tooth came out and we sent that. By this time Bennington Swords was wild. He had scoured the city and he had scoured a lot of other cities, but scourin' a city don't mean that you can get the entrée to every bloomin' private flat that's in it. Even the best detectives can only hit the high places.

"Now," says Tony one night, "we got to hit him awful hard."

She wears a little locket around her neck and in it there's a picture of her mother,—looks like Tony to beat the band.

"It's in a good cause, mummy dear," says Tony,—her mother is dead I should have said. "If only you had married the man you wanted to. Now give me a sheet of paper," says Tony, "and turn out all the lights."

The next day Bennington Swords gets it, the locket sealed up with a letter written by his daughter,—a letter that D. Dacres and me spends hours to manufacture; and bein' written in the dark it's some wobbly proposition, let me tell you. It's a letter from a girl whose mind is nearly gone, who is sufferin' agonies of apprehension. It's one of these "For-God's-sake-get-me-out" epistles that'd make your heart stand on end, and she kept hammerin' on the right key. It ended like this:

"I don't know who has got me, but I know one thing, if Senator Pell is not cleared by the 15th, they're goin' to—"

I'd like to have been with Bennington Swords when he got to them last words. Well, you can put yourself in his place—Bob Pell was nobody but Bob Pell, but Tony Swords was Bennington's own daughter and Bennington was beat. For the first time in his life he was up against somethin' that he couldn't feel.

So he walks into DeForest's and sees DeForest behind closed doors.

"Well," he says to DeForest, "you done me brown. Now what do you want?"

"What do you mean?" says DeForest.

"Good Lord, man," says Swords, "this is your own office. Nobody is listenin' to us. What do you want me to do about Bob Pell—and when and how do I get my girl back?"

DeForest, who is as innocent as a new born babe, and as aristocratic as they make 'em, simply shrugs his shoulders.

"I don't want you to do anything about Bob Pell," he says, "and I don't know anything about your daughter."

Well, Swords was stumped again. There was nobody to make a deal with, nobody even to talk to about the thing. So he put a notice in the paper and asked them plain,—whoever they was,—what they wanted him to do. And his own daughter answered him with another letter written in the dark and dictated by G. Gilfoil. It said:

"For God's sake, get me out,—get me out. I am your own daughter,—your flesh and blood. They tell me they want Bob Pell's conviction set aside. They're dictating this letter now; they want him seated in the Senate, they want him cleared. Why do you hesitate—"

You would have sworn she was in a livin' hell. What a little liar that girl was.

In two weeks more it was all over. Bob Pell's conviction was set aside. Bennington Swords proved that every one of the witnesses had committed perjury. Bob's impeachment was annulled and he was reinstated in the Senate.

When it was all over a dainty, dashing little proposition got out of a taxicab and walked easily up the brown stone steps of Bennington Swords's residence.

"Hello, Pop," she says, "I'm tired to death."

He dragged her into the library, so they say, and looked her over.

"You—you're all right?" he asked.

And then she broke down. "I—I—I've been with Billy Pomeroy," she whimpered.

It was a lucky lie, for as it turned out Swords hadn't had him watched for the past week.

"You've been with Billy Pomeroy," he gasps.

"He kept me prisoner," sobs Tony.

And the funny part of it is that Swords believed it. He was made that way. Tell his anything good about anybody and it was pooh-pooh for yours, tell him any-

thing bad and you got to him right away.

"Billy Pomeroy," he says. "Are you married then?" he asks.

Tony Swords beats him to a finish. You can just see her hanging her head and hiding her face in her hands and whisperin'—"No."

In half an hour or less Swords had landed Billy Pomeroy. He found him in a corner of the Chatelet Club. You may as well know that by this time Billy Pomeroy had been put considerable wise. He had got a few letters of a different kind hisself. So Bennington Swords finds him and starts in.

"One minute, Mr. Swords," says Billy Pomeroy, "let us go into this private room. Your daughter's name—"

They goes into the private room and Billy shuts the door and puts his back against it.

"My daughter's name," roars Bennington Swords, "you young scoundrel—"

Now Billy Pomeroy stands six feet three in his stocking feet. His flesh is laid on hard. He is about four times the size of Swords and he's got other advantages just at the present time. He's as cool as a cucumber, while Swords is blind with rage.

"You scoundrel," says Swords.

"Well," says Billy Pomeroy, without arguin' the question, "what are you goin' to do about it?"

"I'll have you hung," say Swords.

"Oh, no you won't," says Billy, supercilious like. "Your legislature has done lots of things, but they won't pass a law to hang a man for stealing a girl,—not yet. We're in the East, Mr. Swords, and they're lots of us can do things without goin' to the chair—"

"I'll send you up for twenty years," screamed Swords.

"Go ahead and do it," says Pomeroy. "You know what it means to you, and you know what it means to your daughter Tony, since you insist upon her name bein' dragged into this controversy. It means mud, that's what it means, Swords." He didn't even call him Mr. Swords, so Tony says. "It means muck, newspaper muck,—it means draggin' the name of Bennington Swords and his daughter through the gutter,—that's what it means. Now you sit down there, Swords, and I'll sit here, and we'll talk about it calm."

So they talked about it calm and Billy Pomeroy did most of the talkin'. It must have been nuts to hear him. Here was Billy Pomeroy, that wouldn't so much as have touched Tony's finger tips unless she let him,—here was Billy Pomeroy admitting everything that the old man charged him with by the simple process of sayin' nothing at all on that score,—and here was Billy Pomeroy tellin' the old man what lively readin' it'd make for the general public if he was brought to trial, and how cheerfully Swords's enemies would bear it.

"Then," says Swords finally to Billy Pomeroy, "you've got to do one thing. You've got to marry Antoinette."

Billy Pomeroy folds his arms and looks the old man square in the eye.

"Not until you ask me," he says, "not until you get down on your knees and beg me to." Then he steps over and taps the old man on the chest. "How much do I get for marryin' her?" he says.

That was all. The papers come out the next day and reported that the whole thing was an elopement and that Tony Swords was Mrs. Billy Pomeroy,—which she was, for they was married on that afternoon. It told more. It told how Bennington Swords had never been beaten but once in his whole life, and that was this time by his daughter.

It was a fancy story and it made everybody laugh, and it had a fancy heading. They called it this,—"A duel of Swords." No matter now that you and me mightn't have been willin' to stand all that fuss and feathers. Tony Swords stood it for just one reason. It got her what she wanted. Nothing ever stood between Bennington Swords and what he wanted, and little Tony was a chip off the old block.

But the bean was the bean of D. Dacres, and the hand was the hand of Gertie Gilfoil. Joe Gish has just had hold of that same hand. Joe don't know just what it was he done that kept him banished from my flat, but he got down on his knees and begged my pardon for it.

THE CURSE OF ALI KHAN

BY H. P. HOLT

Angered at the prospect of dying at sea after planning to stage the event against a backdrop of tropical scenery, Ali Khan invokes the aid of Kismet and puts a hoodoo upon the steamer from which he makes the final dive.

LI KHAN was a gentleman from the East, where they have their own way of doing things; and he had a grievance against the tramp steamer Syren. Those who go down to the sea in ships must not be too fussy about their burial place, for their business is at best precarious. But Ali Khan wanted to sleep his long sleep under one particular banyan tree near where his mother spanked him in his happy boyhood; and when some deck cargo broke loose and rolled over him in a choppy sea, causing his hours to be numbered, he vented his anger on the inoffensive Syren. He summoned all his expiring energy to utter a curse on the craft and everybody connected with it. First he did it in English, and succeeded tolerably well, but for his peroration he dropped back into his mother tongue, without which he could not put a proper edge on the thing.

All this appeared to relieve him a great deal, for there was an Eastern smile on his face when he slipped his cable. The Eastern smile may mean various things: the only thing about it you can ever be sure of is that you can never know just what it means.

Silas Flagg, skipper of the Syren, was not gifted with much imagination, but he looked round apprehensively after listening to the final effort of Ali Khan, as though he half expected to hear the rustle of wings in the stuffy fo'c'sle. He was a perfectly good skipper, and he had no objection to a man dying on his boat if necessary. He contributed a fire bar to Ali's obsequies without grumbling, and even read something out of a prayer book when Ali and the fire bar sank. The part about burials had been torn out, so he read a bit from the baptismal ceremony instead. But all the time he was thinking of Ali Khan's swan-song. Ali had been a Tamil; and when a Tamil begins to utter a curse he leaves little unsaid.

The Syren was grunting her way through the Celebes Sea when the gentleman from the East started on his lonely voyage to the bottom; and six hours later MacDonal, the chief engineer, had to stop the machinery because the wheels wouldn't go round properly. A cylinder head had blown off, and two men were laid up for repairs.

Silas Flagg scratched his chin reflectively, but said nothing. Cylinder heads will blow off in the best regulated engine rooms, if the ship is as old as the Syren was. It took MacDonal and his men two days to make the wheels go round again.

A couple of hundred miles further on the skipper leaped from his bunk at 3 A. M. when he heard a curious grating along the side of the vessel. The engines groaned, spluttered—and stopped. For the first time in her extensive life the Syren had run into some floating wreckage and fouled a wire hawser round her propeller. Ordinarily when that happens you are towed into dry dock and allow expensive experts to unwind the hawser, but there are neither wrecking tugs nor dry docks in the Celebes Sea. A perfect nightmare of cargo had to be shifted from the after hold and piled forward, to lift the boat's heel up, and then MacDonal performed a prodigious amphibious feat while swung over the stern, with a cold chisel and hammer. It was four days before the Syren was chugging ahead again, and by then there was not a soul on

the ship who was noticeably amiable.

Among her other infirmities, the Syren was addicted to leaking. She always had leaked, even when Captain Flagg first paced her bridge many years before, and the skipper would scarcely have known her now had the leak stopped; but it had always been a steady, reasonable leak. Perhaps her skin was scraped away by the floating wreckage. Anyway, she began to take in water at a rate which was entirely unreasonable, and the skipper scratched his chin afresh. Incidents of an unpleasant nature were crowding altogether too fast for his liking. Of course all this had nothing to do with Ali Khan, but events were working out just as if Ali's hoodoo amounted to something. The weather, however, remained perfect, and that was a blessing,—if you can call a temperature of a hundred and two in the shade a blessing. The sea was perfectly smooth, and the tramp's prow, cutting into its glassy surface, sent out ever-widening V-shaped ripples on either quarter. The leak taxed the capacity of the pumps to the full, but they kept pace with it until the Syren sidled into Manila, where she was overhauled.

From there she had a cargo for Hongkong, and she was just about mid-way between ports when something really serious broke loose. A thin, trickling stream of smoke began to rise from the forward hold. Gales, rocks and collisions a master mariner faces with comparative calmness, but when his ship begins to burn under him he takes an entirely different view of the matter. In this case Captain Silas Flagg's mahogany-hued cheeks developed a yellowish tinge. For stowed somewhere, deep down in that forward hold, was a case of gunpowder, which, if ignited, would take him and everybody else on the ship a considerable part of the way to heaven. And Silas Flagg felt unprepared for the journey at the moment.

"Dog-gone that heathen!" he muttered between his teeth, although Ali Khan had had no hand in putting the gunpowder on board. The crew passed the hose along like three-year-olds, and a steady stream of water poured on to about ten thousand dollars' worth of cargo which did not carry a nickel of insurance. The crew, thinking only of the fire, and knowing nothing of the gunpowder, stood over the hatch for hours. Captain Flagg, thinking nothing of the cargo and a great deal of the gunpowder, stood by their side directing operations for eight mortal hours, during which time he made a very solemn vow to himself that if he ever had the good fortune to get ashore he would abandon the Syren to her saturnine fate.

They fought the fire to a stand-still by the desperate expedient of filling the forward hold as full of water as an egg is full of meat. The Syren grunted in protest. She lurched like a pot-bellied frog. But the gunpowder was eternally out of business, and Captain Flagg breathed freely once more. All he had to do now was to pump the water back where it came from and pray that the engines would not pound the bottom of the ship through before she fetched up at Hongkong. Nothing else could happen. At least he most fervently hoped so.

The skipper was as familiar with those waters as a sailorman can be. He had weathered typhoons off the east coast of China a dozen times, and he considered that there wasn't a reef between Formosa and Cochin China that he didn't have charted in his mind. There was only one reef on his present run which could possibly bother him, and in view of recent events he decided to give it a wider berth than usual. According to his calculations he ought to pass it to looard at about midnight, but the currents are tricky in that region. He was lying in his berth taking a nap with one eye open, sailor fashion, when he felt the ship swerve slightly out of her course. He shot one nervous glance at the clock and one at the compass over his head. Then, with three skips and a jump, he landed by the side of the mate on the bridge.

"What're you playin' at?" he bellowed.

"I was just coming down to wake you, sir," said the mate. "The current must ha' carried us away to the south'ard. I swear I could see a flashing light dead ahead a few minutes ago."

The sea was aggravatingly calm,— so calm that it would not even make a bell buoy ring. If it was the light ship the mate had seen they must indeed be off their course.

Silas Flagg peered ahead through his night glasses. A cloud was obscuring the moon at the time, and he could not see much on the dark waste of water. The skipper was uneasy. His hand was on the telegraph, ready to ring down for half speed, when the moon peeped out suddenly, and he caught sight of something which nearly stopped his breath.

"Starboard! Starboard! Hard a-starboard!" he yelled to the man at the wheel.

She came round obediently, missing a jagged peak in the reef by inches and churning up the seaweed on the rock with her propeller.

Captain Silas Flagg mopped his perspiring brow and muttered something, but his hectic words were meaningless. His nerves had gone all to pieces. The last shock was as the final straw on the camel's back. Afterward he had no recollection of how he had nursed the ship out of her predicament, nor did he remember a thing that happened in the next thirty-eight hours, during which he stopped on the bridge until the Syren was safely tied up in Hongkong. He went through routine port duties like a man in a dream. And he sailed no more on the tramp. When she put to sea with a new master Flagg watched her go, his eyes narrowed and his brow puckered thoughtfully.

Hongkong is not the easiest place in the world for an out-of-collar master mariner to find a fresh ship, but when the two-by-four steamer Highland Lassie came into port in the care of her mate, the captain having been washed overboard, Flagg was glad to sign on. Six months later he found himself at Colombo in Ceylon. He was smoking his pipe and watching the disreputable looking crows that drift through life in the harbour there, when a sudden commotion arose inside a native bazaar. Excited cries and blows were mingled. Flagg knew too much of the world to interfere with a squabble of that kind, until he noticed that there were several Cingalese abusing one old man. He strode over, took one of the ruffians by the arm and pitched him across the street, hit another squarely on the jaw and laid him out, put his shoulder into a third, squashing him against a wall, and flung a derisive look at two others as they bolted like scared rabbits.

The victim got to his feet slowly and hobbled away without a word, after the way of his kind. But when Flagg returned to the Highland Lassie the old man was there, waiting at the gangway. The skipper recognized him by the countless criss-cross lines on his dried up face.

"A word with thee, master," he said.

Flagg bent his head attentively.

"It was not thy affair, and my bones would have been broken hadst thou not interfered," the Cingalese went on. "Allah is good! Thy affairs are not mine, but I wish thee well."

"All right, daddy. You run along, and keep away from that bunch," Flagg advised.

The old man ignored this. He was looking at the sailor with the dreamy eyes of one who sees visions. He reminded Flagg of Ali Khan somehow. He was just going to pass down the gangway when he stopped awkwardly. Of course it was all flapdoodle to suppose that a man really could put a hoodoo on a ship, but the antics of the Syren had given him a fright, and he had never had any luck after the man from the East died. It was chance, of course. Life at sea was all chance, anyway. But Silas Flagg had scratched his chin and wondered, many a time in the last six months. He had never talked about the curse, because people would have laughed at him.

At the top of the gangway he paused long enough to light his pipe, and then turned to the Cingalese suddenly.

"Do you reckon a feller could wish a curse on a ship if he wanted to?" he asked.

"It might be so," said the other, solemn as an owl.

Flagg fidgeted. The old man had nothing to gain by fooling him, and he ought to know something about it. He and Ali

Khan were out of the same stable, so to speak.

"Well, what's the antidote? How do you get rid of the darn thing, anyway?" Flagg asked, coming down to brass tacks and feeling ridiculous.

Again the dreamy look came into the old man's eyes.

"When the moon is full, and thou knowest not whether to go to the right or left, keep straight on," he said cryptically; and shuffled away without another word.

Some weeks later the Highland Lassie had cleared out of Singapore and was heading for Batavia, when she ran into a dense fog,—the baffling, bewildering, nerve-racking kind of fog that doesn't seem to exist anywhere in the world except off the coast of Sumatra. For two days and two nights the captain stopped on the bridge, running the ship at half speed all the time. Navigation was blind work under such conditions. To keep moving was to run a serious risk. To stop was to present a stationary target for some blundering craft. True, there was precious little traffic in that region, but the possibility of hitting something was always present.

Flagg reached the stage when men fancy they see things in the fog,—dark, shadowy shapes towering up right over the bows. He kept rubbing his eyes and consigning the fog to a still hotter climate. Sometimes he could have sworn he heard a steamer call. He listened, with his head on one side, on several occasions, but came to the conclusion that it was imagination.

When the sound of a real buzzer came at last he thought that it, too, must be fancy. There was no telling how far off it was, nor exactly on which point of the compass it lay. Locating another ship in a fog is a kind of guessing competition for mariners, and they can have as many guesses as they like till the critical moment when a collision has to be averted.

Flagg put his hand on the buzzer lanyard and sent out an answering wail. Also he telegraphed "stop," down into the engine room. And as the Highland Lassie lost way he peered out into the blackness.

Again the other vessel boomed her warning. It sounded horribly near,—somewhere on either bow. Flagg couldn't be sure which. The Highland Lassie had lost steerage way. If she had to swerve suddenly she would be helpless. The skipper jammed the telegraph over to "full speed ahead."

Boom, boom! The other ship was moving,—but where? There were the makings of a dire disaster inside twenty seconds.

"She's coming up on the starboard bow," said the mate warningly.

Flagg could have sworn she was on the other side, but he was not quite sure. In a flash he remembered that away up there, beyond this pall of fog, the moon was full. He wanted to swerve. But which way? It was on the tip of his tongue to give the order "hard a-starboard" and take a chance, hit or miss, when that silly rubbish the Cingalese had talked jangled in his brain. And while it jangled he went straight ahead. Ten seconds later there was a grinding crash and the Highland Lassie shivered from truck to keel. A confused medley of cries rose from the other vessel, which had been rammed amidships.

To get clear, Flagg went astern for a few moments and the other ship was swallowed up in the fog.

"Stand by, there. We're sinking!" came a voice out of the blackness. Flagg ran for'ard himself to ascertain what damage his own vessel had sustained, and he grunted with satisfaction when he found there was nothing worse than a few crushed plates and broken gear. At any rate, he was in no immediate danger. Five minutes later a small boat bumped alongside, and half the crew of the vessel that had been sunk climbed over the side. The others had gone down.

"What ship is this?" a gruff voice asked.

"The Highland Lassie," said Flagg. "Who are you?"

"John Phelps, master of the Syren. Doggone her, the blame thing has been bent on committing suicide ever since I took charge. Now I hope she's satisfied."

"The Syren, eh!" Flagg said in a queer voice. Then he scratched his chin and stared out into the darkness.

THE BLINDNESS OF COURAGE

BY EARL G. CURTIS

A country editor writes a classic paragraph or two on the subject of rowdyism, after which he isn't a very good risk for an insurance company. Sloker spins the yarn.

LOKER stepped briskly up Seventeenth Street until he arrived at the entrance of the dingy little lodging house that was adulated by the name of Wander Inn. Without hesitation, he entered the restaurant and called to grining Eph, the dusky man-of-all-work, and quickly there was set before him a late breakfast. Sloker attacked the food vigorously.

His hunger stifled, he rose and kicked his chair from the table; and at this moment Richmond Ed, Sloker's pal and pardner, came in from his marketing. Ed handed his filled basket over to Eph and greeted Sloker in an off-hand manner, though many days had passed since his eyes had rested on the moon-like face of Sloker. Ed had his failings, but effusiveness was not among them.

"Which way you been drifting, Sloker?"

"Ain't been drifting a-tall, Ed," Sloker answered. "Been anchored ever since I left the Inn. I beat it out to Pitcher's Pass to look in on Mister and Mistress 'Timid' Thompson, and found out that they was getting along all right without my help in spite of their matrimonial handicap. I had my mind made up to slide further West, when I met up with a little skelington of a guy named Gale, who was running the weekly newspaper. When he found out that I was a old-time type sticker, he wanted to hire me; and instead of me drifting on, I took him on for boss, and I been working ever since on the Pitcher's Pass Progressive."

Sloker strolled up front to the tobacco case, secured a can of his favorite, and stuffed his corn-cob. Ed followed him, after shouting several orders in the general direction of the kitchen. They seated themselves at a convenient table.

"This guy Gale was a teeny bit of a rooster, Ed, but he knowed ever'thing 'bout books from a to algebra. He was one of these quiet ginks and wore a pair of spectacles with thick bone frames what made him look uncommonly like an owl. I think something was outer whack with his lungs, as he had come to the mounting burg from one of the skyscraper villages up North.

"There was a guy what had been setting type on the paper, but he and a jug of tanglefoot had got familiar with each other, and Gale had to chase him. His happening across me was a God-send, he said, though I never was called just that before.

"The first day I showed up at the shop, which was a one-story shack on the main stem of the burg, Whaling paid us a visit. Whaling was the guy that uster run the paper. Gale wasn't much of a mixer, I could see that easy enough, but Whaling was one of these big breezy fishes that you got to be friends with. Gale set up on his desk like a little bantam and wiped his specs with his handkerchief the whole time Whaling was spieling. Being as they didn't use none o' them Maxim silencers when they was talking, I listened in.

" 'Gale, there's something on my mind,' Whaling said. 'This here paper is yours to run like you want to, but as one pal to another, I want to slip you a mouthful of good advice, which same is cheap and don't cost you nothing a-tall. You're new in these here hills or you'd know 'bout it yourself. Something was pulled off last night what you might think's good copy

for the Progressive. You're bound to hear 'bout it. And I don't want you to print it.'

"Gale perked up consid'rably.

"'There's a gang of moonshiners over on Titan's Gap and Mart Morley's the kaiser of 'em,' Whaling went on. 'They're all kinfolks. There's a religious revival going on a little ways outer town, and last night the Morley gang come in a body. They butted in on the spiel of the sky-pilot with hoots and yells till they got tired of that innocent fun, and then they hitched their horses to the tent lines and hauled it half-way down the mounting.'

"'But why shouldn't I not print this here outrage?' Gale ast.

"'Because of that Mart Morley,' Whaling told him. 'If you print anything 'bout their hellish doings, he'll ride into Pitcher's Pass with a gun and look you up in the city direct'ry.'

"'What 'bout the law?' Gale wanted to know. 'Wouldn't this here Morley become arrested?'

"'Hardly any,' Whaling said with a laugh. 'We only got one constable and he's a Morley by marriage. The law here wouldn't bother much 'bout a matter of this kind. If you bawl out the Morleys in your paper, you make it a pers'nal affair between you, according to the ways and means of Pitcher's Pass.'

"'That's poppycock,' said Gale.

"'Maybe 'tis,' said Whaling. 'But I didn't never bother 'em none a-tall.'

"'I'll cert'ny look into this,' Gale told him like he was consid'ring the matter. 'I got to make good here and I ain't goner let no gang of rough-necks throw their deviltry in the face of law and order without saying nothing a-tall.'

"'Gale,' said Whaling solemn-like, 'you take my advice and pay no attention to 'em. I know that gang. Pitcher's Pass won't think none the less of you, but if you start something, you got to back it up. Let 'em alone.'

"Whaling went out, but Gale, the nervy little cuss, he didn't promise him nothing.

"One day the next week, just after we had got out the paper, Whaling busted into the shop like a hurricane in a hurry. He had one of our papers in his hands.

"'Man, why didn't you give heed to my warning?' he said to Gale.

"'What you raving 'bout?' ast Gale.

"'This here editorial bawling out the Morleys,' Whaling told him. 'It's going to bring you a bushel of trouble.'

"'So that's what you're stirred up 'bout,' the little man answered him. 'What could I do, Whaling? This here is the only paper in four counties and I was bound to say something 'bout the outrage.'

"'You made it too pers'nal,' said Whaling. 'You called 'em toughs and cowards. That's the worst bawling-out that was ever in the Progressive.

"'Ain't it true?' Gale ast him. 'I looked into the matter careful and I know that ever' word of that editorial is the truth.'

"'It's truth enough,' said Whaling, 'but you're sure in bad. You don't know Mart Morley. You'll hear from him.'

"Gale got up and stretched his five-foot-nothing and laughed a little rueful.

"'I reckon he won't hurt me none,' he said. 'You know I never could be mistook for a white hope.'

"'Don't take my warning for a joke,' Whaling told him. 'You'd better tote a gun.'

"Gale, he laughed out loud.

"'I'm skeered to death of one o' them things,' he said. 'Besides that, I don't believe in gun-toting.'

"'Your way may be best at that,' Whaling said. 'There's plenty round Pitcher's Pass can handle a gun but they don't hanker none to stack up against Mart Morley.'

"Just then the door slammed open and a giant of a man breezed in. He was sure a tough looking hill billy and was 'bout two-thirds full of moonshine. His face was red with spleen and his eyes was hard as two black marbles as they give us all the onct-over, and centered on Gale.

"'I'm Mart Morley,' he said. 'Where's the feller what runs this paper?'

"'I run this here paper,' Gale told him.

"Morley's hand flipped to his hip like a rattlesnake striking and it stayed there, ready, as he looked Gale all over from his shiny shoes to his hair what was parted neat in the middle.

"'You sneaky rat!' Morley hollered. 'I got a good mind to shoot your measly carcass full of daylight. But I ain't goner waste no cartridges on a runt.'

"Ed, the guy said that so nasty that my blood run cold, and if I'd been a scrapper myself, I would 'ave took it up. But you know Sloker was always one o' them run-away-and-fight-another-day guys.

"'I ain't got no time to play with you,' Morley went on. 'I just warn you onct to mind your own bus'ness. The very next time you print Morley in your paper, I'm goner ride in and kill you dead. Whaling, there, he'll tell you Mart Morley's a man of his word!'

"The way the guy looked then, Ed, I didn't need nobody to tell me he'd croak a man as quick as he'd lick up a saucer of moonshine. Gale set there till he finished shining his specs and put them back on his nose. Then he jumped up.

"'Let me tell you something,' he hollered back at the tough whiskey hound. 'I ain't goner let you or any other bully tell me how to run this here paper. I'm goner print the news!'

"'Print all the news you want to,' Morley said, and cussed vi'lently, 'but you keep my folks' name outer it!'

His big open mitt swept out and hit against Gale's face like a gat going off.

"'Take that for a warning,' Morley hollered. 'The next time I'll riddle you!'

"He walked out through a gang of villagers who had come in without a single invite to see what was going on, and he didn't have to do no pushing a-tall.

"When Morley slapped him Gale spun against his desk and his specs flew into a corner. He picked 'em up and they was all busted to hell. Tears was running down the little guy's face and I sure felt sorry for him. But what could he 'ave done, Ed? I ast you. He just set at his desk and hung his head.

"'Don't be down-hearted, old feller,' Whaling told him. 'You wasn't no match for him.'

"'He slapped me like I was a woman,' Gale kinder moaned. 'I'd give five years of my life to be as big as he is and get him in front of me. Whaling, you ain't got no idea what a man goes through when God don't see fit to give him the full size of a man!'

"'Cheer up, Gale,' Whaling said and slipped an arm round his shoulders like a big brother. 'There ain't no use mourning. If you had had a gun now—'

"'He had one,' Gale butted in bitter, 'But I was too little a runt for him to waste cartridges on.'

"'He didn't mean to use his gun,' Whaling told him, 'but he will next time. If I was you I'd drop 'em offen my list.'

"'So help me God!' Gale swore out loud. 'If Mart Morley stirs up another outrage, I'll put it on the front page and print an extra!'

"'Our folks are funny in these matters,' Whaling said. 'They'll think you orter defend yourself. They don't monkey none with the Morleys, but by their code, you orter 'ave backed up your editorial with a gun. You bawled out the Morleys and then let Mart manhandle you without a comeback.'

"'I didn't have a chanct,' said Gale. 'I wasn't looking for him to hit me, and he went before I could get my wits to working.'

"'Take that and learn how to handle it,' Whaling said impulsive-like, and slammed his own gat down on the desk. 'A gun makes a heap of difference sometimes.'

"'Thanks most awfully,' said Gale. 'I'll learn how to do bus'ness with it.'

"Things went along to the bad, for we didn't have such a easy time with the paper. It seemed to me that the natives of the burg went outer their way to dodge Gale when they seen him coming. He was slipping 'em a good paper all right, but since the day Morley had waltzed in and slapped him, he didn't have the folks with him.

"Most all the advertisers looked at Gale with vacant faces and the circulation fell down most amazing. But I stuck to the little cuss in spite of the wages not coming so reg'lar. He was losing all he had in the paper, but he hung on like a bull terrier.

"Then come the day Gale found out that the Morleys had been on another rampage. A bunch of the village folks had

got up a picnic at a place that was on the narrow-gauge what run up in the neighborhood of Titan's Gap. The Morleys had held up the picnic train, had beat up the engineer, and had shot the smoke-stack into an ash-sifter. Then they drifted.

"This must 'ave been what brother Gale was waiting for. Ed, that guy could sure write insults. He called that gang ever'thing he could think of that was not nice. So help me Harry, Ed, what he wrote would 'ave stung the hide of a rhinocereenos. In comparison with that, the editorial Morley had smacked him for was only a teeny-weeny bluff of a chicken-hearted chink. It filled the whole entire front page of the next Progressive, and the paper's circulation went up all at onct. The townfolks read it with their eyes popping out and waited for something to drop, which same was Gale.

"Two days afterwards Gale was out to his lunch and 'bout time for him to come back, I ambled out to the front of the shop. Up the street I seen him coming, his hands full of mail he had just got from the Post Office. Just when Gale got twenty-five feet from the shop I heard somebody holler:

"'Gale!'

"I looked cross the street and there stood the Morley guy with a gat in his hand that meant serious sickness for my boss. Gale, he stopped short a second, with a funny little smile on his mouth. My heart jumped clean up in my throat. I was certain sure the little guy was a goner, for Morley could 'ave hit a fly at that distance. Then Gale done something what made me shiver.

"He turned face to face with Morley and with nothing in his hands but his mail, he begins to walk across the street toward the gun-man, still with that funny grin on his face. I tried to holler at him but I found out that my voice had turned into a twitter like a canary bird. I just stood and gaped.

"Gale kept on walking, his chin stuck out. Ever' second I listened to hear the gat go off and see the little guy crumple. Morley aimed his gun and his face growed more vicious, but Gale kept on coming. Then, so help me Harry, Ed, if Morley didn't turn and run into a narrow alley to where his horse was tied. Gale just out-nerved him.

"The whole gang what had been looking went to Gale, who had stopped still and was looking to where Morley had been. One of the burg's biggest guys grabbed the lady-like hands of my boss and almost wrung 'em off.

"'Man,' he said, 'that was the bravest ack I ever heard of. Mart Morley won't dare show his face in town for a year!'

"To sum it up, that's about what they all said. It was like a reunion of old pals. I could see then that Gale could 'ave been elected mayor of the burg if he had wanted to. Also and moreover, the paper was goner make money.

"At last Gale got loose from 'em and beat it to the shop, me tagging along.

"'Boss,' I ast him, 'Whyn't you pull your gat? Where is it at?'

"He slapped his hand on his hip. Then he grinned like a kid caught in the pantry, and pointed at his desk.

"'There 'tis,' he said.

"And sure enough, there it laid, as useful as a putty blower when Gale was walking up to Morley. Gale dropped into his chair like he was kinder tired and picked out a small package from his mail. He opened the box and took outer it his specs with the thick bone frames and stuck 'em into place, and onct more he looked like a wise old owl. And then I knowed what I'd missed 'bout him.

"'You remember, Sloker, these specs was broke when Morley hit me that day,' he told me. 'I've cert'ny missed 'em. But they saved my life today.'

"I looked at him like ever'body was at the ball game. I didn't get him a-tall.

"'When I walked across to Morley just now,' Gale went on, 'I thought some friend was calling and beckoning for me to come over.'

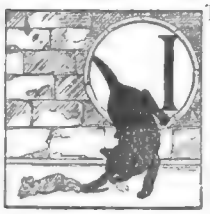
"He took the specs from off his long educated nose and picked up a newspaper.

"'You see, Sloker,' he continued on, 'I can read this paper all right, but when I ain't got my specs on I can't see a dam' thing across the street.'"

AN INTERNATIONAL INCIDENT

BY ROY DAVIS

The simple desecration of an international boundary line develops into a Frankenstein, involving the premature shipment of a carload of potatoes and the sacrifice of a couple of domestic animals.



IT was one of those gray, calm September afternoons common in the woods of northern Maine. Just as gray and calm as the afternoon was Deacon John Broadhead, absent-mindedly clinking his axe on one of those squat pyramidal boundary marks which indicate the adjacent possessions of Canada and the United States. But the Deacon was not thinking of the boundary mark. He was surveying with much satisfaction the completed renovation of his back-pasture fence.

Crackling twigs among the hemlocks on the Canadian side of the fence, drew his attention to a well-dressed hunter emerging from the shadowy swamp, gun on shoulder. The newcomer, catching sight of the Deacon's tall figure, approached the fence, exclaiming:

"Why, how do you do, Deacon!"

"Pretty pert, for an old fellow, Mr. Colhurst," returned the Deacon, straightening up his gaunt but muscular body. "I manage to keep niggin' away. Where's your folks this fall?"

"The whole crowd's been down to Marionville this season," replied the hunter, leaning his rifle against the boundary mark, "but I've got to get back to New York and the office tomorrow. I wonder," he added, by way of keeping up the conversation, "what one of these boundary posts weighs?"

"Three hundred pounds or more," suggested the Deacon, scraping the toe of his boot on the squat little pyramid, "and solid enough for a hitching post."

"Hitching post; hitching post?" interrogated Mr. Colhurst, becoming suddenly interested, "Say, with a ring in the top or a knob of some kind, it would make a unique post."

"Rather out of the general run, I reckon," agreed the Deacon, uninterestedly.

"By thunder!" cried the New York man, "see here! Every fellow down there at our summer colony is breaking his neck to have queerer fixings than anyone else:—Bill Prat has four totem poles, worth the whole Blackfeet tribe, as corner posts to his pavillion, Ned Parson's got the tomb stone of a Mayflower ancestor, epitaph and all, for a front door step, and Sam Morgan's cows drink spring water out of an Egyptian sarcophagus; but I'll bet no one has an international boundary stone for a hitching post."

"I reckon not," agreed the Deacon, whose black eyes began to shine.

"See here, Deacon," went on Colhurst, "ship that post to my summer place, Barrytown, New York, and I'll give you $50."

"Well," replied Broadhead, deacon and farmer, "boundary posts ain't easy moved. I reckon they be cheap at $100, cash in advance."

"All right," returned the banker with a laugh, fumbling in his coat and drawing out a checkbook and fountain pen, "I'm not up on the retail price of international hitching posts, only deliver the merchandise at earliest convenience."

Knowing her husband, Mrs. John Broadhead was not much surprised when he declared at supper that it was such a fine moonlight night he would just hitch up Old Bob and draw down a load of them dry poles from the back pasture for firewood before it rained. Folks not knowing Deacon Broadhead, might have been

astonished to see a man of sixty undertake alone to move a boundary post. But to the Deacon, it was no problem. It was simply a logging chain round that stump there, a tackle to that strong hemlock limb overhead, a noose around the boundary post, a heave or two on his crowbar, with Old Bob's broad chest as a steady strain and "Geedap! Whoa!" the international boundary had been desecrated.

That night the moon, which no doubt shone calmly on Bingen, as the poet says, also shone on a pile of hay carelessly heaped in the corner of Deacon Broadhead's well-kept barn floor and the same moon shone calmly as well on the face of Deacon Broadhead as calmly sleeping after honest toil.

"I reckon, Martha, I'll fix up the corn bin this morning," explained the forehanded Deacon, accepting his regular second cup of coffee at breakfast the next morning.

The hammering and sawing later, attested to Mrs. Broadhead that her husband was making a solid job of the bin.

That evening the Deacon drove, as always, for the mail and shopping to Marionville. His mail usually, in fact, always consisted of one or more of the following: The Piscataquay News, The Farmer's Home, with at intervals, a stray seed catalogue. This evening however, Ned Coulter, postmaster, storekeeper and selectman in one, handed him a letter, remarking—

"Gettin' on, Deacon, correspondence pourin' in on you this way," and adding, "Say, Sam Pierce's been here twice fer you. He's all het up, says that boundary post in your back pasture's missin'."

"Tain't likely it's run off, is it?" remarked the Deacon dryly, hiding behind centuries of Broadhead imperturbability.

"No," went on the grocer, as the Deacon thumbed his way awkwardly to the contents of his envelope, "but Sam's clear wild; says it's gone sure. He ain't had much to do as sheriff since he couldn't get no case agin the Widder Madden's boy for trappin' rabbits, but he reckons this'll be a government affair, a kinder international robbery."

Meanwhile the Deacon's hand, shaking slightly, had wormed its way to the letter and he read by the swinging brass lamp suspended from the ceiling:

"Dear Deacon: For the love of heaven call off the deal about the boundary mark. They tell me it means electrocution, hanging, torture, and worse to touch one of these things. Get me a stuffed Indian or a pickled wild-cat instead. Burn this.

Colhurst."

"Hey, Deacon," called the postmaster, as the old man shuffled out, "you've forgot Martha's 'Farmer's Home.' Don't you worry," he added, laughing, "tain't likely the Grand Jury will hold you, even if that stone was on your back lot."

Deacon Broadhead, driving home, slouched his wiry old body over the dash board and, true to Broadhead tradition, prepared to rise to any emergency. That an emergency was coming, had in fact already come, he realized. Nosey Sam Pierce, county sheriff, who never did an honest day's work farming, would wear his boots off following that boundary post. Half the county would interest itself. The Deacon already saw the chattering crowds about the postoffice viewing the arrival of some Washington or even Canadian official, come to search out the desecrator of the boundary of two nations. Even as the Deacon turned into his own lane and saw the dim eye of the low-turned lantern ready at his kitchen window he realized that right beneath his own roof was an ever vigilant if unconscious investigator, who demanded constant explanation of his every movement.

For a moment he had a wild notion of turning Old Bob around, unhitching him and stealthily hauling the carriage to the barn by hand. This would give him time to bury the boundary post—for bury it he knew he must, and at once; but even as he pulled the old horse up with a jerk, the light vanished from the window and Martha appeared, lantern in hand, at the door of the carriage shed.

Next morning, behind the barn, concealed by his orchard, Deacon Broadhead dug a hole. Mrs. Broadhead was always

busy until nine in the kitchen. The way the Deacon's shovel threw the black dirt about would have proved to any "captain or colonel or knight-at-arms" that men of sixty may be valuable, at least as sappers, in military affairs. Again Old Bob's intelligent strength, coupled with a chain and the stone drag, assisted, and his master clinked his shovel with satisfaction, even cheerfulness, on the last visible inch of the boundary mark before he carefully covered it with rich loam.

"What you berryin'?" inquired a cracked voice that made the Deacon turn with a start.

The speaker, a little old, bent man in blue overalls, leaned on a bucksaw and blinked at the Deacon through his watery eyes. Three times the Deacon gulped, twice he coughed as he wiped the sweat from his face, but he said nothing. Never had a Broadhead been caught in a lie.

"Oh, be it your red calf that was ailin'?" inquired the little man, Tim Mosher.

Gloomily the Deacon shook his head and muttered, "When a critter's like that calf, even thoroughwort tea ain't no use."

"Well," said Tim, to himself, as he hobbled away to attack the wood pile of the Reverend Josiah MacLure, "it do beat the deuce how tight the Deacon's gettin'; he's worse cut up over losin' a calf than most folks about a babby."

Meanwhile with a troubled mind the Deacon placed his shovel in the stable and looked regretfully at the fat flanks of his red calf. Too well the Deacon knew Old Tim's garrulous tongue and how fast his wobbly legs would carry the story of the red calf's death. Already in his mind's eye, the Deacon saw the poor thing a victim of fate,—and beef still at summer prices, too.

"Martha," he said at dinner, "that red calf's almighty fat. I reckon I'll beef it right away."

"Why, John Broadhead!" exclaimed his wife, "An' you give me that critter for my Thanksgivin' dress!"

"Well, the critter can't live," stolidly asserted the Deacon. Before that eventful meal was over, Mrs. Martha Broadhead realized that, after all, even forty years of wedded life had not permitted her to really understand her John. She certainly did not understand the Deacon's secrecy, as behind closed doors he sought like an assassin the death of the red calf.

That evening the victim, carefully covered with bags, lay under the Deacon's seat as he drove for the mail.

"Lo, Deacon," said Judd Simpkins as Old Bob stopped from habit before the postoffice, "hear tell you lost your red calf."

"Yep, the critter's dead," assented the Deacon.

"What you got in the back of your express," inquired Judd facetiously. "Ain't sellin' the meat?"

Here Deacon Broadhead's reputation stood him in stead. He gave no answer. None was required, none expected.

"Well," went on Judd, resting a square-toed shoe on the forward hub and spitting reflectively through the spokes, "me an' Pete's comin' down to-morrow mornin', if you don't mind, to get the critter for fox bait."

"Didn't Tim say I'd buried it?" inquired the Deacon.

"Don't make no difference to us," returned Judd, as he moved off, "and the arth'll make it tasty for foxes. We'll exhume the remains along about eight to-morrow."

"I say, Deacon," broke in a long thin man, whose cadaverous face seemed actually to exude tobacco, "I bin comin' down to see you about that boundary mark."

The speaker, Sheriff Sam Pierce, laid one hand reflectively on Old Bob's broad back, as he continued, "I been figgerin' this thing carefully, seein' it's a kind of a international affair; but your cart tracks where you been haulin' poles mixed me all up. I've found the loggin' chain though, the criminals used, an' seems to me you're kind of liable as this county holds you responsible fer protectin' that post on your land."

"Well, Sam," returned the Deacon, "I reckon the Broadheads didn't ask to have it put there no more'n they asked to have it took. Anyways a boundary post's anywheres; 'twarn't on my land,—seems to me

just sort of betwixt an' between like."

"I dunno," said Sam, somewhat perplexed by the Broadhead logic, "it must have been somewheres, an' it was nearer your land than anybody's else's. Howsomever, I ain't askin' you to incriminate yourself, but I'm goin' to summon you for witness."

"Witness!" replied the Deacon testily, "Fer what? Ain't everybody seen that stone same as me?"

"Well, I warn you that what you say will be held agin yer," cautioned the officious sheriff, remembering having heard such language somewhere.

Slowly Deacon Broadhead drove home, the red calf jolting dismally in the bottom of the wagon. Thoughtful, too, was the Deacon, and with reason, for Martha would expect, even require for the dress the price of the calf—for a calf that must be buried to be exhumed for fox bait.

Cautiously the Deacon unhitched Old Bob up the road, far from Martha's alert ear; even more cautiously he placed himself between the shafts and bumped with his melancholy freight down the cow lane to the barn, good Old Bob plodding faithfully in the rear. Deliberately, and with even greater caution, the Deacon assembled his stone drag, crowbar, shovel and chains. Once more, Old Bob's broad chest assisted and the restless boundary mark disappeared from the bright moon into the shadows of the barn cellar where a studiously careless pile of straw hid it.

No doubt the moon has seen too many strange things to have been surprised to see the venerable Deacon clawing in his cellar as he carefully dug out and placed in a bushel basket the entrails that he had as carefully buried that morning. No doubt the Deacon hoped that no one but the moon heard what he muttered as he staggered with the calf, worth fifteen cents a pound, and cast it with a thud into the hole lately vacated by the migratory boundary post.

Grim and erect was the Deacon, when later he rattled noisily into the yard behind Old Bob and took the lantern from his wife's hand.

"What's the matter, John?" inquired Martha, whose sharp eyes instinctively read trouble.

"Old Hardy weren't eatin' when I went up to town," replied her husband, into whose sore-pressed soul despair thrust a sudden desperate chance.

"What!" cried Martha, "we ain't goin' to lose that old sheep? Why didn't you let me know before you went an' I'd have given him some tansy tea."

"Tansy tea won't help him," answered the Deacon hopelessly, "I reckon he can't live."

"Well, John Broadhead," exclaimed Mrs. Broadhead, "what's come over you? Here you beef the red calf an' you don't care whether Old Hardy dies or not."

Without further words, Mrs. Broadhead possessed herself of the lantern and proceeded to the sheep-pen in the barn cellar. "You needn't bother comin'," she said as her husband, leaving Old Bob half-unharnessed, hurried after her. But follow her he did, possessing himself solicitiously of the lantern as they entered the barn cellar where the sheep-pen was.

"Why, you're pert enough, old fellow," said Martha, patting the friendly wether's nose.

"Well, he'd the blind staggers or somethin'; an' I reckon he's a goner," insisted the Deacon, carefully holding the lantern so that the reflector cast a bright light full on Old Hardy's blinking eyes.

Carefully the Deacon lighted his wife from the cellar, and leaving her to go to the house he went to stable Old Bob. Carefully the Deacon searched in the stable for his long, sharp needle, used for sewing up bags. Quietly he returned to the sheep-pen. Not even the moon saw him in there, and the moon was not more calm than he as he stepped again into its light, pausing only to give one reproachful look at the shadowy nemesis on the stone drag.

"Old Hardy's dead, jest's I thought," sadly announced the Deacon next morning, setting the milk pails in the sink.

"Oh dear," cried his wife, throwing herself into a chair. "Well, we'll get something for the pulled wool anyways,—what's them two fellows carryin' off?" she asked, glancing out of the window, as Judd and

Pete came round the barn carrying between them a heavy bag on a pole.

"I give them the carcass fer fox bait," explained her husband, resolutely washing his hands at the sink as he calculated the cash value of a calf's hide, a pulled fleece, and a carcass of mutton.

"Seems to me they happened round awful early," began Mrs. Broadhead, but the sound of wheels interrupted her and she said, "Why, if here ain't Sam Pierce an' a stranger at this hour in the mornin'!"

"Mornin', Deacon," said the sheriff. "This is Mr. Blum, High Sheriff of Aroostook County. Me and Sheriff Blum are associated in this international case together, an' I'm comin' to you first as wantin' to be fair an' above board. But there ain't no tracks up in that pasture 'ceptin' yours and Old Bob's, an' Tim says that loggin' chain's yours. Deacon Broadhead, have you anything to confess?" shouted Sam dramatically, suddenly leaning over from the wagon and peering into the old man's face.

But the Deacon hid behind centuries of Broadhead taciturnity. "Confess!" he answered sardonically. "Yep, I confess you're a bigger ass than I reckoned, Sam Pierce. What you think I want that boundary post for? A tombstone? Maybe I need it for a hitching post, you reckon?" he concluded with artistic finality.

But the Deacon had made a false step. Sam never dreamed the culprit stood before him, but to be told he was an ass in the presence of the High Sheriff of Aroostook was the rub.

"Deacon John Broadhead," he yelled, "I reckon I'll learn you for ensultin' the law. Me and Sheriff Blum here will examine these premises right now."

"Not without a warrant, Sam Pierce," dryly retorted the Deacon, straightening up his gaunt form.

"He's got the law fer it," suggested Sam's solemn companion.

Without a word, Sheriff Pierce turned his horse and rattled out of the lane.

But even as Sam thundered over Mullin Bridge, search warrant in mind, Deacon John Broadhead was summoning aid to nullify the meditated search. Like a real great man he did not waste time in a crisis, searching heaven above and earth beneath for means; instead, he adapted at once some common thing at hand to his needs, Beauty of Hebron potatoes.

For the Deacon was, in his way, a trader; that is, when he elected to ship to Portland hay, turnips, or potatoes, all his neighbors shipped, too, one full carload, freight collect.

Blessing the rural telephone, the Deacon called his various neighbors and all agreed that that very afternoon was without question the propitious time for shipping potatoes.

Toiling, rejoicing, if not sorrowing, the Deacon in due time appeared headed Marionville-ward, walking beside Old Bob, who tugged industriously a small but heavy load of potatoes. From time to time other loads of potatoes appeared out of neighboring lanes. The Deacon, however, led the procession and was indeed so far in advance that his load was all safely stowed away in the box car before the second cart appeared. He was just laboriously balancing on the edge of the car his last bag, by far the largest and heaviest of all, when his eye caught sight of Sam Pierce, racing like a modern Jehu past the depot. With one tremendous heave the Deacon landed his burden inside the car, where it fell with a thud, and turned to bow as the Sheriff thundered by. The Deacon gave a sigh seemingly of relief, but still without a pause he rolled the last bag to a corner of the car and carefully piled the other bags upon it.

Calmly, even jovially, the perspiring Deacon replied to the first neighbor who appeared with a load of Beauty of Hebrons and the information that Sam Pierce was headed toward the Broadhead farm bearing a search warrant. Still calm the Deacon greeted the second farmer bearing the astounding news of the warrant. Carefully the Deacon himself piled the two loads of potatoes upon his own and then leaving his neighbors to complete the car, proceeded to the postoffice.

Here in a large slanting hand he penned a letter to Mr. John Colhurst. Without giving in detail the contents of this docu-

ment, it may be said to have begun something after the following fashion:

"Am forwarding to you a carload of best Beauty of Hebron potatoes, freight collect. Please remit as soon as possible."

Incidently he noted the strange disappearance of the boundary mark and suggested facetiously enough that should Mr. Colhurst hear in the way of business of a stray boundary post in his city he might see that it was forwarded with due care at once to Sheriff Pierce whose address was given. A postscript added that the Deacon had cashed Mr. Colhurst's check for $100.

It may be worth noting that the Deacon's business kept him in town until his neighbors had departed and that he somewhat surprised the station agent by billing his carload of potatoes to New York.

As the Deacon stepped from the freight shed preparatory to seating himself comfortably behind Old Bob his eye chanced to light upon a fat carcass of mutton hanging at the door of the butcher across the street.

Instantly that strange psychological phenomenon known as "association of ideas" transported his mind to his barn cellar, and Old Bob, cart and Deacon disappeared from Marionville with a wild clatter in one enormous cloud of dust. The miniature whirlwind sped with incredible velocity down the Deacon's home road, and the clatter ceased only when the driver sprang from his seat into his own yard.

Wild with excitement, Martha rushed from the house and poured forth the horrible tale of Sam Pierce's desecration of the Broadhead buildings from attic to cellar. To her astonishment her husband seemed less moved than she expected.

"And did they trouble to investigate the barn, too?" inquired the Deacon.

"I guess so," replied Mrs. Broadhead, "from sheep pen to the big beams, but I was too flustered to follow 'em."

Then, but not till then, the Deacon smiled and proceeded to unharness Old Bob. He continued to smile in a manner all his own as he went to the barn. He also smiled as he descended to the barn cellar and carefully covered the remains of Old Hardy with potato bags.

For several days Deacon Broadhead continued to smile in the grim Broadhead manner. Some confusion of facts, it is true, sobered him somewhat, when he learned that while Martha supposed he had sold a dressed calf to the butcher, his neighbors' wives stated that it was a sheep. Carefully he pointed out that Tim Mosher always got things mixed up,—and then he resumed his smile.

A few days later in New York, Mr. Colhurst in his private office scratched his head as he read the Deacon's letter, swore softly to himself, laughed outrageously, and then, though it was a busy morning, called his auto. After some thought, he sought out a blear-eyed old man of the sea, one Tipsy Tim, secured for him a snug berth on a square-rigger bound at the end of the week, lumber-laden, to Buenos Aires. This gentleman he commissioned to haunt the freight depot for the rest of the week and instructed him to ship at his earliest convenience to Samuel Pierce a certain weighty package.

That Tipsy Tim followed directions seems certain, for some days later Deacon Broadhead, loading potatoes one late afternoon, was accosted by the station agent. "There's an almighty heavy bit of freight here, Deacon," said the agent, "for Sam Pierce. Wish you'd dump it off at his place on the way home."

"Well," replied Mr. Broadhead, "I reckon I'll just do that to show Sam there ain't no hard feelins'."

Calm was he late evening and calm was the Deacon astride Sam's freight, as he drew up at the sheriff's door. With such a thud did the package tumble to the ground that the sleepy but inquiring head of the sheriff himself appeared almost instantly at an open window.

"Freight package, Sam," laconically explained the Deacon, "I stuck the freight charges in the baggin'."

The waning moon squinted late that night through Deacon Broadhead's window, and if the Deacon had not been so sound asleep he might have squinted back.

THE CONTINENTAL ATTITUDE

BY HELEN HISCOCK EAGER

A young lady ties up a section of a busy street, severs diplomatic relations with a traffic officer and does some pinch hitting for the Boy Scouts. After that she is ready to go to lunch.

OW this sort of thing has got to stop right here."

"What sort of thing?" Martha smiled innocently up into the face of the policeman who darkened the open windows of her car.

"Blocking traffic. Don't you know that you are not allowed to park at a street car terminal?"

"But I am not parked; I am just waiting for that car to get out of the way so that I can go on."

"Well, you have plenty of room to go through on this side of the street car, and you have already stayed here over ten minutes. Look at the line of machines you are holding up."

"It is too bad," she answered. "They may be in a hurry." Yet she made no effort to release her brakes.

"Move on, now, and get a hustle on, or I'll take your number."

Still she sat motionless, with her gloved hands resting lightly on the polished wood of her steering wheel and her eyes continuing their pleasant scrutiny of the man's exasperated face.

"I tell you to move on."

"Can't do it. I am sorry, but I absolutely refuse to drive over that mess ahead; and there is nothing behind me but a Ford, and that would follow if I did."

The officer glanced at the pavement in front of her car; it was strewn with the wreckage of what had formerly been milk bottles; he then looked helplessly at the line of automobiles squawking their impatience behind, and at the street car that showed no sign of starting.

"It's against the rules to have traffic held up like this. I am sorry, but I shall have to ask you to move on."

"Not over that glass," and Martha settled herself comfortably back in her seat and watched the flush of anger mount beneath the man's wind-whipped complexion.

"You do as I tell you."

"I am sorry, but I have more respect for my tires than for your authority," she answered. "It is as much a part of your duty to keep things from being thrown on the pavements as it is to keep the streets open."

"Now, none of your talk. You women are more bother than all the other drivers put together. For the last time, will you move on?"

"Not over that glass!"

"When that street car gets out of the way, you drive to that lot where they are excavating. You are under arrest and will either agree to remain parked until my time is up or I will call the patrol."

"Oh, I will remain all right," Martha cheerfully promised. "Officer, what is your nationality?" she added, smiling sweetly at him.

"Austrian," he snapped. "What's that to you?"

"I just missed the Irish blarney," she told him. "There is something so continental in your attitude toward a woman!"

"Say, young lady!" The man stepped up on the running-board and laid his clinched hand on her wheel. "You had better look out how you poke fun at an officer of the law."

"Won't you ride with me to my parking place?" Martha met his dark eyes unflinchingly. "The street car is moving now."

"You stand still and let the other machines go through first," he ordered.

"And if you leave your car, I'll see you get it heavy. I have your number all right."

"And I have three perfectly good witnesses as to the impassable condition of the pavement ahead," she remarked dryly, to his retreating back. "We motorists have complained and complained of the broken bottles; now I think I can take the matter into court."

She waited obediently until the last machine had gone by, then she swung out into the car track and was cheered on her way by the sound of a blow-out as a Ford ploughed recklessly through the shattered glass.

"Another blockade for the Austrian!" she murmured, as she drew up to the curb and looked back to where the little car stood, with its driver angrily kicking the glass to one side as he shoved his jack under the tattered tire.

"I may as well write his number down," and Martha suited the action to the words, then curled comfortably up on her cushion.

The streets were beginning to be more crowded as the noon hour approached. The men in the excavation had that expectant air that comes with the thought of the noon hour's rest, while even the horses, dragging their heavy load up to the sidewalk, seemed to smell around wistfully for the nose bags of feed. The little restaurant, left standing alone on the corner, held tempting displays in its one big window, and its door began to swing open, often emitting tantalizing odors to the passer-by.

Martha began to feel hungry, and wondered how much longer she must wait for her escort. She watched the big Austrian, hoping that he might be relieved, but the noon whistle only increased his labors, for, with its sound, working humanity poured out of office and factory and swarmed with reckless abandon through the streets. The speedy efficiency with which the man shot traffic along was remarkable; he was especially careful of children, and once he picked up a little lad and carried him through the crowds to the restaurant door, where the child's sister took him in charge again and led him into the building.

"He thinks more of children than of women," reflected Martha, but her quiet contemplation was cut short by a blast within the excavation.

The explosion was terrific; it made the girl's car tremble, and rattled the frame of the windshield so that she flung her hands up to her face, expecting the glass to shatter. No one else seemed to notice anything unusual, and the endless stream of people went by with scarcely a glance at the yawning hole by the side of the walk.

"I think I am getting nervous over my arrest," Martha muttered shakily. Her gaze became riveted on the blank wall ahead. Suddenly she became convinced that she was watching for something. Then she noticed that the wall was not quite true as it rose unsupported above the excavation. Springing out of the car, she ran toward the front of the building and studied it for an instant. One corner had settled perceptibly. She tried the door, but it was wedged in place and required strength to pull it open.

The dining-hall was crowded. Noisy groups of laborers filled the small tables, and busy waitresses rushed back and forth from the kitchen in the rear with their trays laden with food.

Martha saw at a glance that a panic would be fatal. There was only the one narrow door, and the one big plate-glass window, which was obstructed by a high wooden screen. The people must be gotten out quickly, but without startling all of the occupants at once.

"Will you please leave immediately, all of you?" she asked of those at the nearest table. "There has been an explosion and the building is not safe."

Four men looked up at her in frank unbelief. "Ah, you go on," said one; "you can't kid us like that!"

"Look at the water in your tumblers," she continued. They looked and saw that it almost ran out on one side.

"Be quiet," she cautioned, "and one of you go back to the kitchen and have the manager clear it out; there must be a rear entrance."

One of the men did as she ordered,

leaving her free to go down through the crowded room from table to table. No one else questioned her orders, for the air was growing white with powdered plaster and the soup and water began to slop over on the table cloths. She saw that no more waitresses came from the kitchen, and knew that her wishes had been carried out.

Those who remained unwarned felt intuitively that something was amiss. They glanced up uneasily and saw the empty tables and the other diners leaving in haste. Someone flung back a chair and it fell with a crash to the floor. Fear whitened the faces of all, and spread like fire among them. They sprang to their feet and stood uncertain which way to go. In that instant of hesitation the big plate-glass window broke with the report of a pistol shot. At the sound, the instinct of self-preservation changed each individual into an elemental part of a crazy mob.

Martha backed through the aisle, fighting the mad rush to the exit. Men and women struggled against each other as her detaining arms kept them away from the door, but she held out with desperate strength, her lithe body stretched to its limit so that only one by one could the terror-stricken people pass through the narrow opening and into the street. At last there was no one left to struggle against her aching arms, and she was left alone amid the overturned tables and broken chairs.

The noise of shuffling feet at the door died away. Then there came to Martha's ears the sound of a child's frightened sobbing. She could not see distinctly, for the air was thick with powdered plaster. She stumbled forward in the direction of the sound.

"Where are you?" she called, as the cry came again from the rear of the room, but her voice was choked by the fine dust and swallowed up in the menacing rumble of the crumbling walls.

Chairs and tables seemed to heap themselves before her; several times she slipped in the grease of overturned dishes; great slabs of plaster began to fall; but at intervals she could hear the voice that sobbed so piteously.

"I am coming, I am coming," Martha shouted. At last she saw the outline of a figure crouching on the floor ahead.

"It is all right, son," she said, as she reached the terrified child. "Come this way, the kitchen door is nearest."

The boy was too frantic with fear to move, and his sobs became shrieks as she endeavored to pull him along. Instinct warned her to hurry, and she caught him up in her arms and ran into the kitchen, for that exit was much nearer than the front door. The room was dark and evil smelling with its stifling fumes of half-cooked meals; she had to fight for breath in the close air as she groped her way across the pot-strewn floor to the door that led outside.

She managed to hold the child still as she turned the knob of the door. It was sticky with grease and her hand slipped around without opening it; so, still talking to the boy, she set him down so that each hand might be free. The knob turned this time but still the door would not open. She beat on it, hoping to force it to move, or to attract the attention of some one on the outside. But no one responded, and the door remained fast. She turned to the window, with its coating of soot and grime, but it was barred by a heavy grating and too high up for her to reach. Behind her, in the big room of the eating hall, the rumbling grew to a roar, and the child screamed with fear as he clung to her skirt.

"It is all right, sweetheart," she panted, and caught him up again in her arms. "We must get to the other door quick." She swayed a little as she gazed with horror out through the open doorway.

The walls of the big room began to tilt, and sag to one side. The floor beneath her seemed grinding on its foundations, and the open door just in front was torn from its hinges and crumpled with the falling walls. Above the roar, the snap and crash of timbers rang out, and in the little kitchen, plaster began to tumble as it was jarred from its place by the vibrations of the collapsing room without.

"Keep your eyes shut," Martha whispered, and dropped on the floor with her body bent over the child like a shield.

She, too, closed her eyes, for she feared she would go mad if she looked again into the crazy chaos just beyond. The air became thicker and thicker, choked with the dust of the falling walls, and the boy began to struggle in her arms as he fought for breath.

"It is all right," she managed to whisper again, though her mouth and lips were cracked and dry, and her voice seemed to catch in her throat. "It is all right; we are safe here and some one will come to us soon."

The boy stopped crying and lay still against her breast. She tried to speak to him, but the words would not come; darkness seemed to be closing over her. She fought for breath and struggled to keep her senses clear, but the suffocating atmosphere grew thicker and thicker, and a patch of falling plaster struck her shoulder with such force that she fainted.

Voices seemed to come from very far away,—strange voices of men,—and then a breath of pure air forced itself into Martha's dust-choked lungs. She tried to move and open her eyes, but the numbness still held her. Some one bathed her face with water and its coolness revived her.

"The boy?" she managed to whisper, struggling to sit up, but gentle hands restrained her.

"He is all right," a man's voice said, and it seemed to the girl that she, too, had said those same words over and over, in the agony of the past.

"Are you hurt?" asked an officer, as he leaned down and lifted her gently up from the floor in his big, strong arms.

"My shoulder feels queer," she answered, though it was hard to make the words come, her throat was so parched and dry, and her lips so thick and stiff. "I remember some plaster fell and hit me."

"You sure have plenty of nerve," he told her, as he carried her slowly and carefully out through the smashed-in kitchen door.

"But I was dreadfully afraid, oh, dreadfully afraid! I wanted to run with the others! I——" but she could say no more, for a shout went up from the crowded street, a shout that was battered back and forth as it rose from the throats of the men and women waiting there.

"It's you they are cheering," said the officer, as he saw her eyes fixed inquiringly on his face. "They thought we would never bring you out alive."

"And you, I have been trying to remember," she whispered, with her white lips close to his ear. "You are the Austrian, and I am under arrest for blocking traffic."

"Forget it!" His face worked beneath the shadow of his cap. "You can block the whole blooming town if you want to. That was my boy in there; he was forgotten by his sister in the rush."

FOR December: THE LAW OF SALVAGE *by Frederick J. Jackson,* in which a young man, with an idea in his head and a success formula pasted in his hat, bucks a combination of grouch, egotism, and general cussedness, and walks off with first honors. Mr. Jackson is the author of the story "No Other Gods Before Me," which won the prize in the June contest.

THE WOMAN WITH THE ODD NECK

BY BEN HECHT

A woman possessing more than one person's share of physical deformities goes to live in a town where ignorance and superstition are conspicuous features. She is looked upon as the advance agent of famine, flood, pestilence and higher tax rates.

TWO weeks after she came to our village we tried to drive her out. She had moved into the little frame house at the end of Monument Street,—our haunted house. Four of our trustees called upon her. They were men who had been born in our village and they had taken the matter of Frieda Heffner into their own hands.

She was a strange old woman, gnarled and misshapen. Our trustees told her that the village did not want her and said they would pay her fare back to the city. They told her the Board was figuring on tearing down the house into which she had moved.

"No good ever came of that house, Miss," said Amos Case, who was a short red-faced man who owned the livery stable. "Tim Donahue who sold the house to you is lying out there in the back yard. He buried himself and how he did it nobody knows. And furthermore you don't look like a woman who belongs and is necessary to this village."

The three trustees with Amos shuffled uncomfortably on their feet. I was one of them. We all tried to keep from looking at Frieda. She was a strange old woman, twisted and with something horrible about her.

There had been a meeting in the Hall a week after Frieda had moved into our haunted house. This house had always been a sore spot in our village. It stood alone at the end of a little road we called Monument Street, a half-rotted, overgrown little house with ugly blotches on its walls. There were elm trees and wild looking bushes around it and the raindrip from the leaves had rotted the roof away. The windows upstairs were boarded and downstairs they were broken and patched. Wild things grew in what had been the yard. At night the old house rattled and moaned and people disliked to pass it. About thirty years ago a man named Sam Gifford had killed his wife in the house. He was taken to the county seat and hanged. But for years afterward people said they saw him sitting behind the broken windows.

Then Tim Donahue came to live with us. He was a strange old man who was always drunk and muttering to himself. He came into the village once a month and he was seldom seen at any other time. He stayed in the house day and night and people wondered what he did in there. At night he would sit by the broken window, his white face and red beard framed in the dismal moonlight which shimmered on the house through the dank elms.

One day we saw Tim digging in his back yard. It was mentioned at the store, but nobody paid any attention to it at the time. A few days after he came to the city hall and had a bill of sale recorded. We saw him go back to the house, shuffling down the dusty road and turning around to look at the village with a queer grin every few hundred feet. After he had been missing for two months three of us went to the house to see what had happened to him. We found the house empty, reeking with strange, humid odors. The walls were dripping, and the stains had crawled across the floor consuming the wood and the iron in their wet. Remembering the hole he had been digging in the back yard we went out and dug it up. About five feet underground lay what was

left of Tim Donahue. He had buried himself without a coffin and he looked horrible when we scraped off the earth.

There was some talk about tearing down the house and removing the remains, but nothing ever came of that. Then one day six months later somebody discovered that the house was occupied. Clint Davies was driving in with some milk cans when he saw a strange old woman sitting at a window looking out at the road.

We saw her in the village soon after when she came in to buy supplies of Tom Hunter at the store. She was queer. She walked with a cane although she was neither bent nor lame. Her body was thin and straight and when we watched her walking down Main Street the first time we noticed that she had a habit of stopping and rising on her tiptoes now and then. But the thing about her that made folks stare was her neck and the color of her face. She was old and looked like a woman who had always been old. But there were no wrinkles in her face and her skin was an ashen blue, a lifeless color with a dead gloss over it. And she kept her head on one side as if she were peering at something with her right eye. Her left eye was closed almost tight and as she walked along she appeared to be squinting at the roofs. When she came into the store, Tom Hunter stared at her. I was sitting at the end of the counter. She asked for some bacon and eggs and bread. Her voice was husky and you could hardly hear what she said. While she talked she kept her head cocked over, her eye squinting at the ceiling and not looking at anything else. I saw she had a queer scar on the side of her neck that was stretched. It was a live scar that glowed red when she talked.

Tom Hunter kept turning around to look at her while he gathered together her order. Our village is off the main road a long way and there are a lot of things which our folks believe in that sound foolish when they're mentioned in the city. When the old woman left the store with her packages she stopped in the doorway and suddenly rose on her toes, her head over on one side, her eye cocked on the ceiling and the scar on her neck burning like a sore. Tom Hunter was born in our village and he crossed himself. He remembered Sam Gifford, the murderer, and often he'd told me things about the lonely blind roads that lie in the woods around our village.

"No good is going to come of that old hag," he said, "Now mark my words."

It was not more than a few days after that that folks began to talk about Frieda Heffner—that was her name according o the bill of sale Tim Donahue had made out before burying himself. The women said she was a witch and warned their children not to go near the house after dark.

When Amos Case finished talking to Frieda the day we went to drive her out of the village, she laughed. Her mouth when she laughed became twisted into a queer lop-sided grin that made her look as if the side of her face against her shoulder was paralysed.

"Get out o' here," she said. "Leave me alone if you know what's good."

She waved her cane at the four of us and, still squinting up at the ceiling, while the red scar on her neck glowed brighter than ever, she pushed us out of the house.

"I won't bother you," she called after us, "if you don't bother me. I'm an old woman and I want to be let alone."

We walked away and I turned to look back at her. I noticed how straight her arms hung down by her sides as she stood in the doorway. I said to Tom Hunter, "Look at her, would you!"

He turned and looked.

"Did you ever see anybody stand so straight?" I said.

"Lord," said Hunter, "she's standing on her tip toes!"

Things got worse after that. The women in our village began to tell stories about Frieda. They said she went out at night to the cemetery that was further on down Monument Street, and they said that strange noises had been heard from inside the old house after dark. Now and then someone came driving in from Gillport with another tale of what he'd heard in passing the black elms that hid the

place where Frieda lived. The boys soon broke all the windows and plastered the wall with mud. Once they tried to set fire to the house, but it rained and put the fire out.

One night, a month after our delegation had visited Frieda, I was walking down Monument Street. I had been over to the widow Baker's home and had stayed till nine o'clock. It was dark. There was no moon. The road was full of dead leaves that rustled and jumped under my feet. When I came in front of the house that stood at the end of Monument Street I stopped. There was no light inside but I heard strange noises. It was somebody groaning and every once in a while crying out in a shriek. The wind was blowing and I thought perhaps I was imagining it. I listened to the trees whipping against the roof and the grass whistling shrilly all around me. Things fell in gusts upon the dark shape of the house and the boards that had been placed over the empty windows rattled and creaked and the leaves moaned dismally as they brushed the walls. But I heard the voice growing louder, bursting through the howling of the wind.

I thought perhaps Frieda was sick and I stood trembling. I decided finally to go into the dark house and see. Nobody answered my knock at the door, so I opened it and entered.

The room was black but I could make out a figure crouching in the middle of the floor. I struck a match and saw Frieda. She sat up straight in the ghastly flicker, her lop-sided mouth stretched wide open and her right eye cocked in horror at the ceiling. She was groaning and shrieking. The match went out, and I jumped and called out to her, "What's the matter? Can I do anything for you?"

Her groans grew worse and I found another match and lighted that and then lighted a lamp on a table. In the dim yellow gleam of the lamp her face turned itself toward me and she stood up. I waited for her to come at me but she remained motionless, her eye still cocked at the ceiling. I saw her rise to her tip toes and stand strained with her arms hanging loose at her sides and the scar on her neck glowing red.

Then she fell down on the floor and I went over and picked her up and took her into another room where there was a bed. She seemed to be asleep so I went away. When I got outside of the house I ran. The lamp had gone out and the house crouched behind me in the darkness.

I did not say anything to anybody but the next morning early I went back and found her eating her breakfast alone. She seemed to be glad to see me and asked me to sit down.

"You came in here last night," she said, "and were nice to me."

She reached out her hand and patted mine. Her hand was cold and the fingers were long and ashen blue. I shivered.

"You were sick last night," I told her. And then I noticed she was crying.

"You're the only one," she said, "who's been nice to me. They've broken all my windows and when they see me in the street they run from me and call me names. I don't dare go out in the daytime because they throw stones at me, so I have to walk in the night."

I felt sorry for her because she was crying and despite her twisted neck and her lop-sided mouth and the color of her face I felt that there was something pitiful about her and I was no longer afraid. I said to her as kindly as I could:

"You ought to go away. The people in our village aren't very broad. They think there's something wrong with you and they're afraid. And besides they don't like your house."

Frieda dried her eyes and still squinting at the ceiling she rubbed the long, stretched side of her neck and began to talk in a low, hoarse voice.

"It hurts me today," she said, "it always hurts me after I've been sick like that. I'll tell you because you ain't a terrible fool like the others. I ain't going to leave this house because I've come here to die. I've been moving from one place to another all my life. They don't let me stay anywhere. They keep driving me away because I look like this and

frighten them and their children. I'm queer. I was born like this with my head twisted and that sore on my neck and my face like this. I had to grow up alone because nobody would play with me. Nobody would marry me when I got older. I've been alone in houses like this all the time. My father kept me in a Home and when he died I got his money and I've been trying to find some place to live. I keep getting sicker all the time, I do, with spells like you saw last night. I can't remember them afterward, but something happens to me that makes me afraid and hurts me and I groan and holler out. I used to have the spells when I was a girl and I've always had 'em. Now they come pretty nearly every night. People have called me a witch and said I'm sold to the devil and said he's twisted me out of shape and put his mark on me. But it ain't so. That's the way I was born and I never meant no harm. But I've always been like this and the doctors don't know what it is, and I'm going to die here."

Frieda stopped talking and moaned. I went away feeling sorry for her, but I didn't go back for a long time. The folks in our village became somewhat used to her although they kept saying no good would come of her and that if the trustees were men they would drive her out and pull the house down.

We had a lot of sickness in our village that fall and this made things bad again. Widow Baker lost one of her girls, and two of Ned Lockwood's boys caught the sickness and one of them died. Old man Meyer died and we had a doctor up from the county seat who said it was a typhoid epidemic. Folks began to blame Frieda.

"The old hag's revenging herself by killing us off," they said, and the talk about driving her out grew serious. When Amos Case got the fever and died things came to a head. There was a meeting in the Hall one night late in October, and after the meeting twenty of the men and a few women started for the house at the end of Monument Street. They carried buckets of tar and a lot of feathers and a long rail ripped off Case's fence.

It was cold and dark and a few of the men in the lead carried lanterns. They walked without talking. I saw there was no use saying or doing anything, so I just followed along with them.

We reached the house and found it dark. There was no sound from inside. The wind was bending the elms down over the roof and shaking the loose things on the house. The empty windows stared out blacker than the night and the place looked dead in the darkness,—dead, with ugly shadows burying it.

The posse walked up the steps and opened the door. The first man in carried a lantern that he held up in front of his face. But when he looked into the room he dropped it and turned around and yelled:

"For God's sake, let me out!"

The men behind him moved back a little but the women yelled, "Go on! Go on! Let's get her!"

There was a lot of noise and excitement, voices and oaths and shrieks. But the house inside remained dark and silent. And then somebody noticed that the house was afire. The flames were creeping in thin bright lines around the door and glowing blue around the windows. The wind came with a gust and the old house suddenly became a torch, and in the great glare of yellow light which burst into the blackness we saw Frieda hanging by a rope that was hitched to the ceiling. And we rushed across the road and stood looking without a sound.

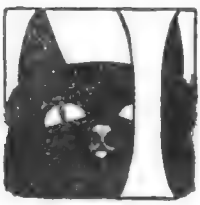
We saw that the rope around her neck was knotted over the scar and that her head was bent the same way as when she was alive, with her right eye opened in horror and squinting at the ceiling. She seemed just as she had seemed when she used to stand on tip toes with her arms hanging straight down and her head bent and her neck stretched. But now there was nothing strange about her, nothing misshapen. She looked as she had always looked with her face ashen blue in the great glare of the flames; but for the first time she looked natural and all of us understood something.

The roaring flames licked at the rope and she disappeared.

THE MAN THE FLY LIT ON

BY GORDON H. CILLEY

No cutting of cards in this tale. Three men are in such a situation that one at least must die. They leave it to a fly to decide, but the fly merely seconds the nomination.



IT was the murk from a far-off jungle fire that hung, a half-choking haze, between land and sky, but the sun pierced through from the brazen heaven overhead and beat down with relentless rays till heat-waves danced from the parched and dusty earth. To the wounded man out in front it brought, first, indescribable agony that was told of in moans. Then the dry and swelling throat choked back even the expression of pain. Now, perhaps, a merciful God had given him unconsciousness—perhaps he was dead.

The three men in the dried-out water hole had few words for each other. There was nothing to say until some one of them should evolve a plan for safety. And what plan could there be? Less than one hundred yards out in front was the bamboo clump and within it was a Filipino sharpshooter and a wary one. Over and over had each of the three held aloft his service hat on the point of his cleaning rod, but the only fire it drew was a chuckling, mocking laugh. It would not work. The little brown disciple of Aguinaldo held cartridges precious. It had sounded like an old Springfield when he shot the corporal—probably that was what it was. If so, then he had but one cartridge in his gun. He could be shot or there might be time to escape before he could reload after that was fired. But that one cartridge was one death. Who's should it be?

Something must be done. Humanity, comradeship, the honor of Old Glory, demanded that the man who lay so curiously bent on the ground out in front should be given succor if the spirit of life remained. And then there was the main body behind, the two weary companies that within an hour would be going into camp, confident of the pickets and unsuspecting an enemy within fifty miles. Yet, if the presence of this sharpshooter, sniping pickets, meant anything at all, it meant that a night surprise was pending. Action was imperative.

There was but one solution, and as each of the three eliminated all other possible chances, that one remained in his mind. And each of the three knew that the others knew. So, when Adams passed around his canteen with an indication that they should drink each a third of the little water that remained, they knew he was about to propose the one plan possible. He waited until the canteen lay empty by his side, and then he whispered:

It's got to be one of us. It's probably a sure thing, for he won't miss at that range. But the man that does it can get up shootin', and maybe it'll startle him. And the other two can jump up and shoot the minute his gun cracks. Shall we draw straws?"

There was no reply. The others looked at each other searchingly. Then they looked down again. Adams went on, his voice hard: "If either of you fellows has got a wife and kids back home, that makes it different." Again he stopped and waited. Then Welch spoke:

"Jim Carney here's got a girl back in Boston. She promised to wait for him."

"Stow your gab," said Carney, roughly. "I'm here to take my chances."

"That's white talk," said Adams, with just a tinge of admiration. "I've got a girl back there too. But that ain't like bein' married, with kids."

"How're we going to choose?" asked Carney, impatiently.

Adams reached up to the edge of the water hole and carefully detached a long, dry blade of file grass. This he began to break into pieces of different lengths. A droning fly buzzed before his face and he slapped at it impatiently. He watched it as it rose, slowly circling, and then he dropped the straws. "Let's leave it to that cussed fly," he said. "It's been fussin' around here ever since we slid into this hole. The man it lights on first."

He looked at the others. Carney nodded his head. Welch watched the fly with a gathering frown and made no reply.

"Where in thunder did it come from?" asked Adams. "It looks like a house fly, like the flies back in the States, and there isn't a house in a day's march."

"There's always flies, everywhere," muttered Welch. "When the last man dies there'll be a fly buzzin' around to worry his last minute. They're always ahead of the army and always behind it. They know. There's a cloud of 'em fussin' around the corporal out yonder, but this fellow won't go out there. He's waitin' for the one of us that stays behind. He knows. Damn him, damn him!" the last words coming furiously.

"Let's all lie still and see who he picks out," said Carney. "We can't waste time."

The men lay on their backs, their aching eyes following every movement of the fly. For the moment, it rested on a swinging blade of grass, its head straight up to the sun and its forelegs contemplatively rubbing their tips together. Then it put down the forelegs and carefully wiped off the tips of its wings with the last pair of legs. Its toilet completed, it crawled slowly to the end of the blade of grass, turned around twice like a dog making its bed, and then rose buzzing and circling in the air. The soldier Welch sat up, pulled his haversack forward from his hip, rummaged in it with his hand, apparently found what he was seeking, and, lying down again, put his hand to his mouth. The others watched him with suspicious interest. "Well, you are a queer one," said Adams, "eating at a time like this."

Welch said nothing, and the three resumed their vigilance of the fly. It rose, a black speck in the air, darted in parabolic curves back and forth, then slowly began to spiral downward. The test was at hand. The men lay alongside with practically facing distance between them. Welch was in the center. The fly descended deliberately, swung back and forth and seemed to still its flight just over the face of Carney. In the breathless silence the faint chord of its wings was distinctly audible. Incontrollably, the soldier's face twitched. The fly darted away. The others looked on without comment while a flush spread over the man's neck and up to his ears.

Then the insect returned and leisurely hummed back and forth and then in a swinging circle above the hand that Adams had stretched out upon the ground. It settled within an inch and the man flinched. The fly mounted upward again.

Again it came back. Flies have no long flight, and already it was weary. This time it would seek a resting place. Its tired wings grew slower in their vibration and the noise of their buzzing deeper and more distinct. It circled twice about the dusty shoes of Adams, and this time he did not move. He looked on with his features drawn in agony and teeth sinking into his lip. Then the fly rose three or four feet in the air, circled slowly and descended like a bullet upon the face of Welch. It alighted on his chin and crawled toward his mouth.

For a long minute the other men looked on in silence. The fly stopped at the man's lip and began to feed. Carney suddenly swept his hand above it and the insect darted off. Both Carney and Adams rose to sitting postures and looked inquiringly at their prostrate comrade. Another minute passed, and a glance shot between them. Carney shifted uneasily and whispered: "Well, Welch, old man?"

Still the man did not move. His eyes were closed and a sort of smile hovered about his lips. Adams seized his arm and shook him. The arm dropped limply back into place.

"Well, by God!" exclaimed Carney, and

then, placing a finger on the man's eyelid, he roughly pushed it back. Only the white of the eye showed.

"Well, by God!" he muttered again, and reached for Welch's wrist. He held it for a little time between his thumb and forefinger, while Adams looked on with a puzzled stare. Carney dropped the wrist and bent his ear to the man's nostrils. Then he drew back, settled himself in his sitting posture and turned to Adams, from whom a question burst:

"Fainted?"

Carney shook his head. "Dead—scared to death—well, by God!"

For full five minutes the men were silent. Then Adams spoke dully: "He took his chance with us, and it fell to him. He faded out without makin' good. But we can make him do it. We can hold him up and let him get shot. Then we can get that sneaking little devil that shot the corporal."

Carney sat up. "Right you are; I was a fool not to think of it, but it knocked me all in a heap to think of Welch turning yellow. It's just what he's good for now. I will hold him up and you can be ready for the little devil."

He seized the body and, hugging it about the hips, strove to raise it so that the head would show above the water hole. But it was still limp; it would not hold erect. With a muttered oath, Carney seized the dead man's rifle and jammed it down the back of the dead man's blouse. The device served and, holding by the hips, and keeping his own head well bent down, he hoisted the corpse erect and upward. There was a moment of agonizing suspense, and then rang out the booming roar of a Springfield. The sound was hardly complete before Adams leaped up and began pumping his Krag at a patch of powder smoke in the bamboo. At the third shot there was a yell and a crashing of branches. Adams dropped his rifle, and ran toward the corporal, while Carney sat weakly down and propped up the body of his friend. There was a yawning hole in the dead man's forehead where the snub-nosed Springfield bullet had crashed through, and a stream of blood trickled away from it.

Adams came back, dragging the corporal, and the two soldiers quickly found not only that his heart was beating, but that his wound was one that would heal. His canteen was found to be half full, and when the nozzle was placed to his lips he drank in unconsciousness greediness.

"If you'll stay here by the corporal, I'll hike back to the column and get the ambulance," said Adams.

Carney replied with a nod, and, when the soldier was gone, he turned to a closer examination of the body of Welch. "Hell of a hole that old Springfield makes," he muttered. He untied the handkerchief from about his neck and started to wipe away the blood. Then he saw something that made him stay his hand. He looked close at the dead man's face and then sprang to his feet and swore aloud. For about the lips of his friend, and spread all over the lower half of his face were—*grains of commissary brown sugar!*

Just before taps that night Carney stood within the flap of the major's tent and saluted. He averred urgent business. The major looked up wearily from his writing and listened. Carney, with more strength of language than was usual to the major's ears, begged that a recommendation would be made for a medal of honor for the dead man, to be sent to his relatives, as is customary when a soldier has died a hero.

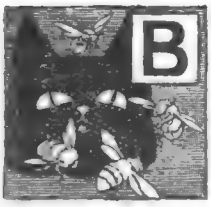
"I thought he had turned yellow," said the soldier, "and, God forgive me, I held up his body and let that little hellion shoot a hole in his head. And then I found that he had fixed it all up. He'd baited himslf with sugar out of his haversack, and that damned fly lit on him just as he figured it would. Physically, sir, it was more than he could stand, and the heart failure killed him when he felt the fly on his chin. But I've heard you say, sir, that the real heroes are the men who do their duty and more than their duty when they are most afraid. You see, sir, he knew Adams and I had sweethearts at home, and he didn't."

"You are right, Carney," said the major, "the moral heroes are the greatest of all. I will make the recommendation for the medal of honor."

THE HAZING OF THE INFANT

BY HARLE OREN CUMMINS

After performing numerous menial duties which substract several points from the sum total of freshman dignity, the Infant questions authority not derived from the consent of the governed and posts a declaration of independence.



BEFORE the door of Room 26, at the lower end of the barracks, were grouped ten or a dozen cadets. They were reading a neat type-written notice which was tacked to the door before them, and judging from their exclamations, various were the emotions which it aroused. And perhaps those emotions were justified, for never before in the history of Stanhope Military College had such a document been seen. This was what they read:

FAIR WARNING

Two weeks ago I came to Stanhope College with the intention of working and attending strictly to my own business. I have carried trunks, grips and suit cases to different parts of the barracks, and in return I have been cuffed and beaten. I have each morning polished ten pairs of boots for ten lazy Juniors, who have only kicked me with these same boots for my labor. I have been deviled every night for two weeks, and though I have taken it all in good part, still I have been abused. I have eaten half a bottle of tabasco sauce and several dozen pepper lozenges. I have done the eagle and the mule, and I have allowed you to play hot pants with me for hours. NOW I AM THROUGH. I come from a State where men shoot with the same accuracy as you dudes part your hair, and I solemnly swear that I will use for a target the first man who lays hands on me, regardless of age, size, or military rank.

CHARLES STUART STEELE.

"Who would have thought that The Infant was such a literary genius?" commented Preston, one of the Juniors referred to in the notice. "What are we going to do about it, Slawton?"

"Do!" answered that person, contemptuously, "why do just what we have been doing to him, only worse and more of it. You leave it to me. I'll see that his guns won't hurt any one."

The Infant wasn't a favorite, except with the Freshmen, for, though he bore all the deviling good-humoredly, even in the midst of it they always felt that he was making fun of them. And he had a most sarcastic tongue for so small a person, for he was only a little chap, scarcely more than a boy. But he had spent the last few years on a Dakota cattle ranch, and was quick and wiry as a steel trap.

He had won several medals for excellence in pistol practice, and had two elegantly mounted Colts in his room. It was upon this marksmanship that he was evidently relying to free himself from the customary hazing during the remainder of Freshman year.

That very night, as The Infant sat down at his desk and opened his calculus, preparatory to an evening's plugging, the door opened softly. Looking up, he saw entering his room four of the principal devilers in college, headed by Herbert Slawton, Prime Deviler and Hazer. The five entered the room, seated themselves comfortably, and Slawton, after locking the door and pocketing the key, advanced to the middle of the room.

"I have been chosen," he began, "as spokesman of the upper classmen, to tell you what we think of you and your conduct. Since your arrival, *mon Enfant*, you have, as your little notice relates, carried trunks, blacked boots, and done various and sundry other tasks, as is the custom of all innocent Freshmen. You have also, as you say, been deviled, but not

one-half so much, my fiery little Dakota bronco, as you will be deviled before you become a yearling. Though you have usually complied with our requests, after a judicious use of the persuader, it has always been in an independent manner of which we do not approve.

"Now, my dear little Infant, let me tell you what we propose to do. We can stand your unseemly conduct no longer. This last act of yours is beyond the limit. This afternoon I personally assisted in the substitution in the chambers of each of your two beautiful little revolvers of blank cartridges, so it is useless for you to look so trustingly at them. Now that the little lion's teeth are drawn, we propose to show you how we treat a Freshman who has rebelled against the ancient and honored custom of deviling. To begin with, you had better take off that red tie, for it offends our sense of good taste. Then you may commence the evening's programme by eagling for us."

The Infant threw himself back in his chair and laughed, laughed till the tears came to his eyes, while the group on the other side of the room looked at him with wonder mixed with an apprehension lest the fear of what was coming had driven his senses from him. But their anxiety was groundless. At last he choked down his uncontrollable mirth, and turning round in his swivel chair so that he faced the group, he began:

"And you five hulking cowards were so easily caught as this! You have come of your own free will and accord and locked yourselves in my room for me to use you for target practice. You thought to outwit a *Westerner* thus. But then, I do not wonder, you are all tenderfeet. *You* didn't know that man's best friend is his gun, that he guards it and watches it, as a mother watches her child. Why, every time I have returned to my room to-day, after an absence, I have inspected these guns. I found out your work not ten minutes after you had done it, and the ball cartridges which are in the chambers now are nice, long 32's. I left the guns out here openly hoping that you would fall into this very trap, but I had no idea that you would bite so quickly. Why my little notice has been up there only eight hours, and behold the mice are all in the trap."

Before the Infant had half finished this speech, he had possessed himself of the silver-mounted revolvers and patted them lovingly. Then he stood up and faced the five.

"I have listened patiently to the long and flowery speech of your spokesman—self-elected I do not doubt." Slawton winced. "Now I have the floor. You all know that I could shoot the five of you in cold blood as you sit there trembling, and no jury in the land would convict me. But I promised to shoot only the first man who laid hands on me, and so, technically, you are all guiltless. However, I will give you a chance. Do any or all of you wish to begin the funereal undertaking?"

As not one of the cowering upper classmen stirred, the Freshman continued:

"I will not kill you, but in our State we have a pleasant little diversion which we call creasing. To be a good creaser one must be an exceptionally good shot, or the sport has its casualities. We stand off from a man at about the distance I am from you, Slawton, and then we shoot, oh, so carefully, at the side of his neck, and, if the creaser knows his business, and the man does not move, the bullet just grazes and leaves a red mark."

The Infant raised the two revolvers and pointed them at Slawton's head.

"For God's sake, put those down," he said, "they might go off."

The Infant laughed long and merrily. "Of course they might," he chuckled; "that's just where the fun comes in. I've nothing to lose if they do. But, as I have some studying to do, we must get to business. You have come here to-night, you five ringleaders of the hazing gang, to see some deviling. You shall not be disappointed. There will, however, be a slight change from the original programme. I will call off the numbers.

"To begin with, you have my key, Slawton. Kindly lay it on the table. Thanks. Now excuse me while I make myself comfortable."

He tossed his desk chair onto the table, then leaped up lightly himself.

"You must really pardon my taking the only grand-stand seat for the coming show, but really I have paid more for my admission, you know. Preston, you have often told me that I did not know how to black your shoes properly, and if I remember rightly, you have on several occasions kicked me for that lack of knowledge. Now there is a pair of muddy golf shoes under the bed, and the blacking kit is over by the window.

"Fowler, I neglected to clean up the hearth this morning, and it is very filthy. Will you please attend to it for me? I think I used my last silk handkerchief cleaning your windows yesterday, so I am afraid you will have to use your own. Perhaps Slawton and the other fellows have some with them, too.

"Benson, what can I do for you? Oh, yes, it was your trunk that I carried up those three long flights of stairs. My little steamer trunk by the couch is rather small, but it is nearly filled with ore specimens, so perhaps it will do. You may lift that to your shoulder and do sentry duty between the closet and the bed, and you must always put down your burden and salute when you pass my chair, you know.

"Reed, I've nothing personally against you. I don't think you really approve of this deviling business any more than I do, and as I've no taste for the dirty work I'll make you my acting foreman. There's a little Mexican quirt over there on the wall which you can take and see to it that these men do their work lively. But remember, your job is only provisional. If I don't see you using the little persuader often enough I'll have to reduce you to the ranks.

"Now, Slawton, King of Devilers, don't think I have forgotten you because I have left you till the last. Oh, no, you are the Lord High Muck-a-Muck, so you are above these petty tasks. But, if I remember rightly, over on the bookcase there is still about half a bottle of tabasco sauce. There is also a dessert-spoon there. I believe you told me when I took my medicine that the dose for an infant was a large teaspoonful. As you are an adult you need more, so you can measure out twice that amount for yourself. Foreman Reed, see to it that the usual punishment is administered if any is spilled."

It was a strange sight to see those great strong fellows hustling about obeying the commands of the little bantam on the table. And The Infant was enjoying himself. Not cruel by nature, but remembering what he had endured during the past two weeks at the hands of those same four fellows, he could not but congratulate himself. As he saw Reed walking about cutting the others viciously with the quirt he howled with glee.

"That's right, Foreman, give it to them. Don't let them idle away precious hours.

" No, Preston, that will not do," he said, as the shoes were presented for inspection. "You have sadly neglected the heels. Kindly turn round so I can administer the ancient and honored chastisement.

"Now we will have the class in eagling. Foreman, line up your squad of four and put them through the drill." And as the men lined up he raised his voice threateningly. "The one who stops first takes the rest of the tabasco. Reed, get the spoon and bottle."

Up and down with arms extended, bobbed the four. With the awful penalty for failure in view they exerted every muscle. Eagling, even for a few minutes, is not a pleasant pastime, but when you do it for half an hour it becomes absolute torture. The sweat oozed out in great drops on the four red faces and rolled down into their eyes, but still no one gave in. Foreman Reed, with the bottle of tabasco in one hand and the spoon in the other, walked up and down in front of them. He was enjoying the evening almost as much as The Infant.

At last, Slawton, who was in wretched physical condition, gave up and tumbled to the floor.

"Now, don't be a pig, Slawton," called The Infant, reprovingly; "you've had your share already Foreman, divide up the tabasco evenly among the four.

"Let me see, what comes next?" mused the youth on the table. "Oh, yes, hot pants, that's it. Reed, kindly prepare the

victims. I think you know what portion of the clothing it is necessary to remove for the success of this game. You will find on the closet shelf the cute little pine shingle which they used on me two nights ago."

At about one o'clock, after his ingenuity had become exhausted, the Freshman called a halt.

"You may all sit down now," he said. "Reed, take that pillow from under Slawton; he's not playing the game fair. Pillows never followed hot pants in the way I learned the game. Now, boys, I have enjoyed this evening's entertainment more than I can ever tell you, and I have but one thing further to propose. At my dictation my foreman will now write out two articles, both of which each one of you will sign.

"In the first article, you four, who are really the head of the hazing business, agree to do your best to put a stop to it. The second article you will sign will be a statement of what you have done to-night in this room for my amusement, and which statement I will show to every Freshman in college, if you do not live up to your promises in contract No. 1. I will also send a copy of article No. 2 to the *Daily Times* in case such promises are broken. You can imagine what a warm place Stanhope will be for you if that programme is carried out.

"But if you keep to the agreement, and hazing is stopped in this school, I promise that no one but we six shall ever know what has taken place here to-night."

He dictated the two articles, and the others signed them.

"This concludes the evening's entertainment, ladies and gents. Now all that remains for you to do is to make as graceful an exit from the stage as was your entrance somewhat earlier in the evening. As it is too late to bother to unlock the door you may open the window and jump to the ground. There is a nice bank of soft, wet snow about six feet deep down below, so you will not hurt yourselves. You may all go except Slawton. I wish to speak to him alone. He will meet you in his room in about ten minutes and will have something very interesting and amusing to show you."

They opened the window, and one after another disappeared into darkness. When the last one had gone The Infant turned to Slawton, who was waiting in dread for he knew not what.

The Infant tore off a sheet from his pad and scribbled a few lines, biting hs lips meanwhile to suppress a smile. He sealed the bit of paper in an envelope and handed it to Slawton who stood waiting by the desk, all the bravado gone out of him.

Slawton hastened to the window and jumped out, picked himself up shivering from the wet, slushy snow into which he had fallen, and wearily climbed the fire escape to his room.

Then, if you can, imagine the feelings of those four wet, weary and aching bullies as they read the following:

"To four of the easiest marks on earth. Greeting:

"If it is possible for one more small grain of humiliation to enter into your cowardly souls, listen—

"I had been away from my room all day and barely returned when you made your call to-night. The revolvers before which you cringed and ducked, and under whose influence you blacked my boots, took hot pants, and ate tabasco sauce until your throats burned, were exactly as you left them in the afternoon—*with blanks in every chamber.*"

NEXT month: THE SECOND OBEDIENCE *by Herman H. Matteson,* a story of seal poaching on Vancouver Island, with incidental music on the love motif.

THE BLACK CAT CLUB

(Continued from page 2)

The Cup On the Nail is a story of plot rather than of characterization, and its strength lies in the "business" of the fake homesteader's mental kinks. Kee Caution's obstinate notion of hanging his drinking cup always on the right hand nail is a splendid bit of realism to convince the reader that he is a genuine homesteader. The author also uses this ruse for the vastly different purpose of convincing the visitor that Kee is not what he pretends to be. Splendid double use of one instrument! The drawing of hardware in apparent insistence of Kee's queer notion is such drastic insistence that it cinches the doubt in the other character's mind as to his identity; but it is not until Hendershot calls Kee's bluff and makes his own confession that the reader is given the identity of the two. This is an admirable example of suspension of plot and the maintaining of the interest by a concealed disclosure, if one may be permitted the paradox. The arrival of the "owner of these diggin's," and his humorous answer to the roll call of those present makes an appropriate finis to a clever, interest-holding story.

Conservative Sam is a green goods tale in which the author does one of the most difficult, one of the most subtle things that a writer can do. He makes one instinctively feel that the rat-faced man is a crook, yet he succeeds in gaining our sympathy for his character. The author's intention towards characterization is fully achieved by antithesis of action. The reader's interest in the characters is concerned with the result as revealed by the juxtaposition of the opposing aims. The material employed, unfortunately, is not of universal interest and is appreciated by a certain class only.

"Once a wanderer always a wanderer," is the basis of *Tea and Toast*. The idea of two tramps clinging to their business and taking turn and turn about in tramping, is a peculiarly happy one. Richmond Ed is a typical tramp who endears himself to his audience by telling a joke on himself. In this story he is not fully developed as a character, but with his mouth full of tramp vernacular, he makes a good eccentric talking machine. His partner is little more than a question mark with a voice. *Tea and Toast* has no great moral lesson and the characters are not shining lights of virtue, which does not necessarily defeat its purpose as a humorous story.

A Modern Martyr is a gentle satire on modern surgical greed. Another arrangement of the incidents in this tale might have made it a really humorous short-story.

The Twelfth Contest comprises the stories in this issue, (November); and all lists must be received at the office of the BLACK CAT, Salem, Mass., before December 1st. Prizes will be awarded December 10th; and the result of the contest will be announced in the February BLACK CAT; issued January 15th.

A PRIZE of $25 will be awarded to the author of the story which is selected as the best story of the month by the largest number of club members.

A PRIZE of $10. will be awarded to the member sending in the best criticism.

A PRIZE of $5. will be awarded to the member sending in the next best criticism.

PRIZES of $2.50 EACH will be awarded to members whose criticisms rank third and fourth in the contest.

PRIZES of $1.00 EACH will be awarded to five other members whose criticisms are of sufficient merit to deserve reward.

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Salem, Mass.

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I have read the November Black Cat and enclose herewith a list of the stories arranged in the order that they appeal to me, with a criticism of each. I am also enclosing twenty-five cents, in return for which please send me one of the club buttons with a.....back.

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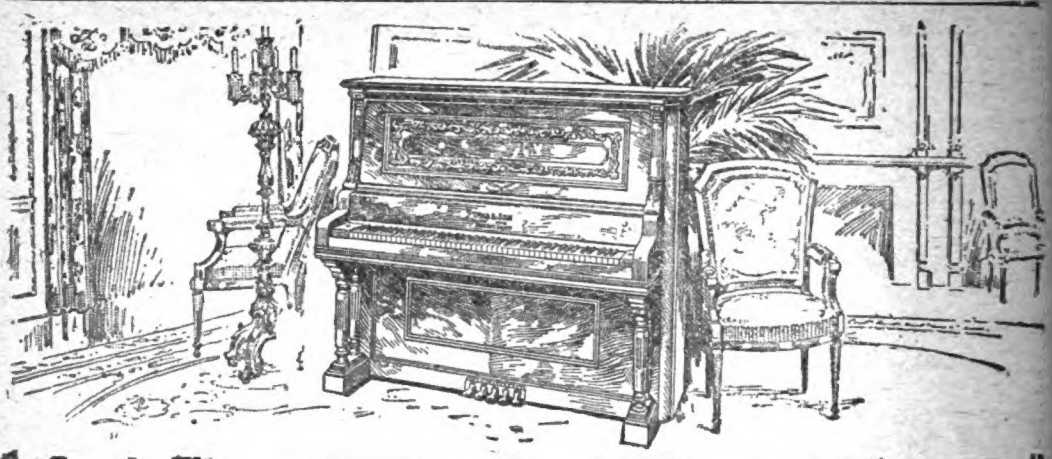
Note: If you do not care for a club button strike out the last sentence above. Members are not obliged to purchase buttons. If you desire one, specify in the blank space whether you wish the pin or the screw back.



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